The Palestinian Novel

From 1948 to the Present



Bashir Abu-Manneh

THE PALESTINIAN NOVEL

What happens to the Palestinian novel after the national dispossession of the *nakba*, and how do Palestinian novelists respond to this massive crisis? This is the first study in English to chart the development of the Palestinian novel in exile and under occupation from 1948 onwards. By reading the novel in the context of the ebb and flow of Arab and Palestinian revolution, Bashir Abu-Manneh defines the links between aesthetics and politics. Combining historical analysis with textual readings of key novels by Jabra, Kanafani, Habiby, and Khalifeh, the chronicle of the Palestinian novel unfolds as one that articulates humanism, self-sacrifice as collective redemption, mutuality, and self-realization. Political challenge, hope, and possibility are followed by the decay of collective and individual agency. Genet's and Khoury's unrivalled literary homages to Palestinian revolt are also examined. By critically engaging with Lukács, Adorno, and postcolonial theory, questions of struggle and self-determination take centre stage.

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To my father

I shall write so I understand why the world besieges me; that is first.
And second, I shall write in the hope to escape the siege of this world.
And third, I shall write in the hope of finding an escape for the whole world from this siege.

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (1988)

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Note on transliteration

The Library of Congress transliteration method has been employed in this book. This has been applied to names of publications, journals, and newspapers with no standard English version of their names; as well as names of individuals with no similar standard form in English (with some minor exceptions). Names that are commonly known or already have a spelling in English (such as Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Emile Habiby, Abdulrahman Munif, and so on) are written as they are commonly used.

Introduction: theory, history and form

In 2010, 'a museum of modern Iraqi culture' was destroyed by an explosion in Baghdad.[1] The house in Mansour neighbourhood belonged to the late Palestinian writer Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. Since his death in 1994, his family kept the house intact in the hope that its valuable contents would one day be open to the public. Now, lost forever, are thousands of letters from the Arab world's leading writers and artists in the last half century, paintings by famous Iraqi artists (such as Jewad Salim, Shākar Hasan, and Su'ad al-'Atar), hundreds of books and manuscripts, numerous unpublished works by Jabra himself, and, finally, numerous recordings of literary evenings and talks. For many commentators, this event was rife with symbolism, and indicative of contemporary Arab fragmentation and decline.

Jabra was one of the leading intellectuals in the Arab world. Poet, painter, novelist, translator, and cultural commentator, he represented a whole generation of writers and artists who responded to the challenges of twentieth-century Arab history, such as the Palestinian *nakba* (catastrophe) of 1948 and the Arab defeat of 1967, by constructing a new Arab cultural renaissance. The formal end of Western colonialism meant the freedom to build a new Arab foundation, neither imitative of the West nor beholden to the values and traditions of the old social order. If Palestine was the colonial exception to a region-wide decolonization, its main lesson for Jabra was clear: renew in order to redeem and rectify. The road back to Jerusalem went through Arab enlightenment and modernization. What Jabra signified, then, is the artistic freedom, innovation, and versatility of a whole generation of Arab modernizers. And what was lost in his house is 'the memory of one of the richest and most fertile periods of creativity' in the Arab world.[2]

Among the ravages and rubble of the US occupation of Iraq and its political institutionalization of sectarian, ethnic, and religious infighting, something else was registered. A uniquely Palestinian journey: a story of a Palestinian refugee from Bethlehem who, on the heels of the Palestinian

nakba, found a secure home in buzzing Baghdad of the 1950s, and scaled the heights of Arab and Iraqi culture. It is a Palestinian story of Arab integration and belonging. Here too the symbolism was rife: the destruction of Jabra's house is an emblem of the destruction of the Palestinian community in Iraq. It restages Palestinian dispossession, and it reminds Palestinians of their permanent insecurity. As a consequence of the sectarian civil war, 28,000 Palestinian refugees (out of 35,000) were forced to flee Baghdad and become refugees again. It is a small number compared to the catastrophic scale of Iraqi numbers: hundreds of thousands dead and five million internally and externally displaced.[3] Yet it compounds the Iraqi tragedy to note that none of the surrounding states would take the Palestinian refugees, and many would languish for years in the no man's land between Iraq and Syria and on the borders of Jordan and Saudi Arabia. If some found shelter in Latin America or Scandinavia, none would be allowed to return to Israel or the 1967 occupied territories. Thus, the story of Jabra and Iraq's Palestinians ends as it began: in homelessness and insecurity. Statelessness, permanent exile, and occupation mark out the Palestinians historically from their Arab counterparts.

How might one best access this cultural repository of the second Arab renaissance lost in Jabra's house? How to reinsert oneself into its 'structure of feeling' (its 'meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt') and possibility, and register the loosening hold of a Western-subordinated Arab order, and the emergence of Arab autonomy and self-determination which marks this period?[4] Through the novel, I would posit, and the Palestinian novel at that. The novel became the dominant Arab literary form of the twentieth century, and with its preoccupation with ordinary, everyday, lived experience, it is the form best suited to capture the social imaginary of a whole historical period. More specifically, the Palestinian novel, because the social and political position of Palestinians after the *nakba* – as refugees and outsiders geographically scattered all over the Arab world who had the least stake in an oppressive status quo – gave them both an Arab-wide vantage point and the restlessness of dispossession. Rather than express narrow particularism, they affirmed universal categories: humanism, self-sacrifice as collective redemption, mutuality, reciprocity, and individual self-realization.

Novels like Jabra's *The Ship* (1970) and *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978), Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* (1963), and Emile Habiby's *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist* (1974) were at the core of Arab contestation and innovation. They were as central to the Arab novel culturally as the Palestinian cause was central to the Arab world

politically, marking both significant region-wide shifts and crucial conjunctures. Nothing better captures the Arab malaise after the defeat of 1967 than Jabra's *The Ship*, where a group of intellectuals float around the Mediterranean interrogating their lives and histories, and searching for existential coherence and meaning, or Jabra and Abdelrahman Munif's jointly written *World without Maps* (1982), which through its depiction of the imaginary city of 'Amuriyya marks both the failure of the radical attempt to roll back the effects of 1967 and the emergence of Gulf oil regional dominance.

With its unique openness to Arab-wide feeling, the Palestinian novel marks the struggle between emancipatory emergence and authoritarian restoration. It is not only a chronicle of the Palestinian and Arab history of dispossession, renewal, and defeat, but it also constructs distinctive aesthetic forms and features that register the story of both Palestinian and Arab historical transformation after the *nakba*. Palestinian refugee narratives tell of exile and embeddedness, settler-colonial dispossession and entanglement. As dispossessed exiles living among other Arabs, Palestinian writers were in positions structurally attuned to region-wide political and cultural phenomena. The novel articulates this distinction.

The Palestinian Novel traces the development of the novel from the *nakba* to Oslo. My main objective is to present an arc argument about novelistic development as it relates to the four central Palestinian novelists active after 1948: Baghdad-exiled Jabra (1919–94), Beirut-exiled Kanafani (1936–72), Haifa-based Habiby (1922–96), and Nablus-based Sahar Khalifeh (b. 1942). As is widely acknowledged, their *oeuvres* constitute the core of the Palestinian novel in Arabic. There are clearly other aesthetically compelling Palestinian novels in this period, and increasingly in languages other than Arabic as well – especially in Hebrew and English.[5] But I will only focus on these four writers because the Palestinian novel is substantially (though not exclusively) associated with their foundational work. I do, though, refer to other writers as well, and will discuss two additional texts at key points in my argument: Jean Genet's seminal *Prisoner of Love* (1986) and Elias Khoury's hugely influential *Gate of the Sun* (1998). Both exemplify, in different ways, how the Palestinian revolution became, in Genet's words, '*my* revolution'. Throughout *The Palestine Novel*, I chart the relationship between history and aesthetic form, and show how it has changed since 1948. Categories like realism and modernism are adapted to Palestinian conditions in order to help understand the significant literary shifts and emergences that take place in the novel. My overall aim is to develop a materialist framework for interpreting the Palestinian

novel that combines two major categories: historical processes (including social and political developments) and literary form (including distinct aesthetic characteristics and features). This framework must be sensitive enough to distinguish Palestinian specificities from general Arab conditions, and to take account of uneven temporalities and 'wildly multiple Palestinian actuality' (to use Edward Said's phrase).[6] As a dispossessed and scattered people, Palestinians live under various political, economic, and legal jurisdictions. If most Palestinians became refugees in 1948, their areas of dispersal, and their social and political circumstances of exile were varied. They were also marked by conditions and events that were both Arab-wide (such as the rise of Arab nationalism in the 1950s and its defeat in 1967) and state-specific (such as Black September in Jordan in 1970, when the Jordanian monarchy crushed the Palestinian resistance groups and expelled them to Lebanon).

Uneven condition is thus endemic to Palestinian existence, a basic fact of dispossession and exile. This has very specific consequences. Its main effect, I argue, is political unevenness: structurally disordered conditions of struggle, mass mobilization, and terrains of cultural production. For example, the fact that in 1982 the PLO was politically destroyed by Israel and routed out of Beirut does not mark the end of Palestinian anti-colonialism. A self-organized mass uprising against the Israeli occupation (the first *intifada* of 1987), distinct to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, ruptured that sense of defeat and unleashed new capacities and possibilities of struggle. In other words, while exiled Palestinians organized their revolt in the period after 1967 and were finally defeated in 1982, the culmination of occupied Palestinian mobilization comes in the first *intifada* of 1987 and is ultimately defeated a few years later in Oslo. In their political rise and fall, occupied Palestinians are belated and out of sync with the politics of the exiled. If they were influenced by regional and diaspora developments, their political mobilization remained, nonetheless, autonomous and independent.

In *The Palestinian Novel*, Palestinian unevenness is, therefore, not a general marker of disjointed and discontinuous cultural and economic logics, but something more specific: a distinct and changing relation between culture and politics with its own historical determinations. Here praxis and collective transformation are key categories to prize open novelistic form, and anti-colonial revolutionary struggle becomes a key determinative historical process that develops unevenly and shapes aesthetic choices and possibilities. Such distinct circumstances and uneven temporalities of existence and struggle are crucial for interpreting the Palestinian novel.

Lukács, realism, nation

In the history of twentieth-century criticism, Georg Lukács' writings in the 1930s are best attuned to changes in both history and literary form. It is, in fact, hard to investigate the Palestinian or Arab novel without noting how important Lukács has grown in Arab criticism (Tarabishi's influential translation *The Novel as Bourgeois Epic* appeared in 1979).[7] In addition, categories such as realism (lyrical, social, documentary), critical realism, and socialist realism are intrinsic to Arab criticism, as is the idea (attributed to Lukács) that the novel is a bourgeois form. As editor of *al-Hadaf* magazine, for instance, Kanafani published a positive assessment of Lukács titled 'Georg Lukács: Studies in Realism';[8] and the leading Palestinian critic Faisal Darraj wrote a critical piece about Lukács in the Palestinian resistance journal *Shu'un Filasṭīniyya* titled 'Georg Lukács and the Theory of the Novel' (1979), criticizing his decadence thesis, his tight wedding of novel form to economy and to the fate of the bourgeoisie, and his rejection of the autonomy of art.[9] While Sartre and others were more pervasive and have remained better known influences, the terms of Lukács' criticism filtered in because of their obvious pertinence.

I turn to Lukács in order to construct a critical framework for interpreting the Palestinian novel that connects massive political ruptures to shifts in novel form. Lukács' *The Historical Novel* (1937) is a prototypical materialist interpretation of the European classical realist novel that can work on several historiographical and aesthetic levels for Palestinian novels. Several crucial categories and concepts are usable, especially a Lukácsian periodization of novelistic development based on historical conjuncture. With due consideration to the *unevenness of development* of the novel form that Lukács himself insisted on, I aim to utilize his materialist method and mode of argumentation without falling into his historical parallelism or schematism, or reproducing his prejudices against non-realist forms. By critically examining Lukács' categories, I show how they are informed by a specific political-historical temporality that can be adapted to charting the trajectory of Palestinian novels.

Lukács argues that certain historical circumstances, such as the French Revolution of 1789, generated distinct literary forms (classical realism, or the Scottian historical novel) that were no longer possible after the revolutionary defeats and political disintegration of 1848. Similar hopes and energies arose in other economically less developed countries like Russia, and were shaped by Pushkin and Tolstoy, while in France Balzac's realism was replaced by Flaubert's disillusionment in *Sentimental*

Education (1869). Novelistic form responded to major historical shifts and revolutionary-democratic transformations in the East as well. For Russia, Lukács saw 1905 as politically similar to 1848, with the distinct difference that in the Russian line of development defeat came to be redeemed by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917: 'If, for instance, we note that there was a turning point in the history of the novel with the revolution of 1848 we must realize that this concerns those countries that were affected by the revolution of '48; that Russia – *mutatis mutandis* – experienced a similar turning point of its entire social development in 1905. The Russian novel before 1905 therefore will, in many respects, correspond to the European novel between 1789 and 1848 and not to that of the period after 1848'.[10] Both society and literary genre are affected by historical uneven development. Similar Lukácsian connections emerge in the colonies. In the period of the anti-fascist popular front of the 1930s and the 'heroic struggles of the people against imperialist exploitation and oppression', 'the field of [realist] portrayal' has indeed broadened: 'Now, however, when we are contemporaries of the heroic liberation struggles of the Chinese, Indian, etc., people, all these developments flow concretely into the common historical stream of the liberation of mankind and are therefore portrayable in literature.'[11] As early as the 1930s, when the colonial world was just beginning to awaken politically, Lukács could see that his framework for analyzing the historical and classical realist novel had broader implications. The conjunction of revolutionary-democratic humanism and popular mobilization that lies at the base of his model in *The Historical Novel* can now also be found in the anti-colonial struggles of his day.

I am not suggesting a historical equivalence between European historical conditions in the nineteenth century and the Arab world in the twentieth, or between the European so-called bourgeois revolutions and the anti-colonial struggles in the East. Their content, class composition, and conditions of possibility are different. I don't seek to force Palestinian conditions into pre-existing boxes. Joe Cleary makes this point in relation to Ireland: 'The difficulty with the historical schemas developed by Lukács and Jameson is that they cannot easily be transposed onto the Irish situation. Whatever their differences otherwise, these Marxist cultural histories are elaborated with a metropolitan European or Euro-American capitalist history in mind.'[12] What I aim to do, therefore, is flesh out the Lukácsian relationship between political and aesthetic developments and examine how Lukács' argument about the connection between revolution as mass history and aesthetic form plays out in the Palestinian context. Lukács is wrong when he produces a reductive reading of modernism as

ideologically decadent (Adorno's reading of modernism as resistance to a reified modernity is much more plausible, as I argue in Chapter 5, and link it to the demise of revolutionary potential) or when he judges artworks merely by their producers' proximity or distance from class struggle (the German expressionists exemplify both), or when he suggests that realism ends after 1848. But he is right when he insists that major shifts in novelistic form are rooted in historical transformations, that the artistic autonomy and the social meaning of art are distinct yet relationally mediated notions, and that a historicism attuned to conjuncture and rupture can bear significant literary-critical interpretive fruits.

What interests me is the conceptual apparatus that undergirds Lukács' argument. My critical outline of his views emphasizes his historical periodizing conception and then utilizes what is defensible about his work in order to understand the trajectory of the Palestinian novel. By engaging with recent postcolonial conceptions of the nation, I also argue that a Lukácsian materialism neither ignores nor inflates nationhood in literary interpretation: rather it situates it historically, without assuming its explanatory primacy. This prepares the ground for examining the historicity of the Palestinian novel.

For Lukács, then, all great art is characterized by the capacity to penetrate into the depth of objective reality in order to convey its dynamic forces and real contradictions: its essence and social relations. Such unique epistemological capacities define great art for him: 'Real art thus represents life in its totality, in motion, development and evolution.'[13] Classic realism does exactly that for Lukács. As Lunn explains: 'Lukács defined realism as a literary mode in which the lives of individual characters were portrayed as part of a narrative which situated them within the entire historical dynamics of their society.'[14] Its main features are typicality, writers' social position and knowability. In his writings from the 1930s onwards, the loss of typicality, the loss of connection to popular life, and the loss of the ability to comprehend the world causally, mark a historical and aesthetic turning point between pre-1848 and post-1848 Europe.

Typicality utilizes Engels' notion of 'typical characters in typical circumstances'. Neither merely 'average' nor 'mediocre' – though these elements can be present (as in Scott's 'middling' heroes) – a type is a literary amalgamation of various force-fields (individual, social, and historical) that 'give living human embodiment to historical-social types' (*HN*, 35). These qualities allow 'types' to be individual and universal, expressing uniqueness and commonality at the same time. Their particular features are connected up with the overall determinate structure of society. They

are both fully individual and historically typical, depicted as both subjects and objects of history.[15] Here again Lukács' earlier realist epistemology is evident: type is a form of character that best expresses the movement of social development and its basic contradictions. Lukács judges the efficacy of characters from this specific vantage point.

Because of these distinct features, types enable crucial realist literary goods: the connection between the individual and the historical, and the seamless integration of private and public. Types thus stand at the intersection of major historical changes and ruptures, and are focal points for both large-scale and more private and domestic processes: '[they] stand at the meeting-point of great social-historical collisions. The historical crises are direct components of the individual destinies of the main characters and accordingly form an integral part of the action itself. In this way the individual and the social-historical are inseparably connected in regard to both characterization and action' (*HN*, 200–201). Rupture in this link is consequential: it signifies the breakdown of classical realism and the beginning of its literary-historical disintegration and decay. What is lost is the capacity to depict characters as historical private individuals.

The year 1848 institutionalizes this shift for Lukács. That is the crucial historical point to note. It also ushers in a period of political disengagement and disconnect. This is also felt on the level of writers' social position. Although Lukács finds it hard to sustain this argument, he insists that the shift is not just historical-conjunctural but has to do with the writer's own ability to participate in active class struggle. That too has a drastic impact on style. As Lukács emphasizes in his essay on Zola in *Studies in European Realism*: 'The writer no longer participates in the great struggles of his time, but is reduced to a mere spectator and chronicler of public life.'[16] Solitary observation of human existence is a symptom of such 'social degradation' of the writer. No longer was there a revolution for writers of the imperialist age to actively participate in or engage with, leaving them unmoored from historical and social grounding – in a word, alienated from the people. But active participation in revolt was never the key issue. If it was so, then a totally uninvolved Thomas Mann could never be praised for his realism and elevated above a politically engaged public intellectual like Zola. Realism cannot be made to depend on whether writers actually man the barricades. Suggesting that writers can achieve realism merely by joining the struggling working class is, therefore, an analytically deficient category.[17]

With the shift in social position comes a degradation in mode of description: from realist narration to naturalist description. If Zola

'*described* from the standpoint of an observer', 'Tolstoy … *narrated* from the standpoint of a participant'.[18] 'Narration establishes proportions, description merely levels', and what is lost is 'the real causality of the epic events. And only the experience of this causality can communicate the sense of a real chronological, concrete, historical sequence'. If typicality was about constructing a balance of determinations in narrative – distinguishing between essential and ephemeral, laws and exceptions, fundamentals and fleeting moments – description marks its collapse: a loss of interaction, of meaningful communication, and of the integration of public and private. The clamouring contemporaneity of events undercuts what is primary, while chaotic surface-detail undermines selection and aesthetic organization. The net result is that reality becomes difficult to comprehend and basically unknowable.

What the classic realist novel ultimately represents for Lukács is the idea that history is about popular life. Popular mobilization no longer exists to force the bourgeoisie to engage with subaltern interests and participate in the emancipation of mankind. With the historical defeat of the democratic forces in 1848, fear of the rising power of the proletariat and the revolutionary masses causes the bourgeoisie to ally itself with the *ancien régime*. If Lukács can depict the bourgeoisie as the historical leader of cultural and political revolution, there were other moments when he thought that this was an overestimation of its capacities – as in his essay on Gorki when he states: 'that the tasks of the *bourgeois* revolutions were always carried out really radically by the plebeian democratic elements *against the will* of the *bourgeoisie*'.[19] Historically, this emphasis on plebeian mobilization as the driving force behind the so-called bourgeois revolutions is much more accurate than the notion that these revolutions were bourgeois projects in conception and execution. What both interpretations maintain, however, is the notion of significant bourgeois responsiveness to popular life and mass mobilization. Revolutions radicalize the bourgeoisie and force their hand against the old order. That, indeed, is the crucial component of Lukács' theory of novelistic development. As a result of pressure from below, aesthetics and politics take the form of revolutionary democracy and classical realism. Absent plebeian revolutionism, narrow class interests, and aesthetic decay predominate, for Lukács – even among the progressively minded bourgeoisie.[20]

Lukács' emphasis on history as mass mobilization and popular life comes out of 1789 and is key to understanding his interpretative project. 'The French Revolution', as Michael Löwy notes, 'was a crucial moment in the constitution of the oppressed people –the "innumerable mass"

(Marx) of the exploited – as *historical subject*, as actor in its own liberation'.[21] The masses come into their own here politically as historical actors, and their bold emergence and historical consciousness reshapes both nineteenth-century history and the contours of Lukács' historical novel. A shift in the broad conditions of the bourgeois epoch is marked.

'Bourgeois revolution' thus ushers in various competing forces, struggling over the meaning, direction, and principles of the revolution. For Lukács, these manifest themselves not only on the social level of class struggle and on the economic level of the rise and gradual expansion of bourgeois property, but also in the form of national ideas about independence and national character. Though the national idea is never as fully integrated as a concept in *The Historical Novel* as capitalism and class struggle are, it is worth noting its place in the Lukácsian framework. Early in *The Historical Novel*, he states: 'But the awakening of national sensibility and with it a feeling and understanding for national history occurs not only in France. The Napoleonic wars everywhere evoked a wave of national feeling, of national resistance to the Napoleonic conquests, an experience of enthusiasm for national independence.' Whether 'regenerative or reactionary', whether of 'progressive or reactionary ideology', 'it is clear that these movements – real mass movements – inevitably conveyed a sense and experience of history to broad masses' (25). The national idea is not reified here or disconnected from Europe-wide structural historical changes, or seen as the main generative cause of novelistic form in the trajectory of the historical novel. It is, in fact, seen as part and parcel of a multiple set of determinations that come to affect the nature of the novel. The national idea is seen as part of a changing world history, not its single most important harbinger of meaning and coherence. Placing the nation in the context of history as mass life, capitalist development, and class struggle allows Lukács to formulate the development of the novel in a way that is attuned to its multiple social and historical determinations.

This factor is important to keep in mind before I start discussing the Palestinian novel because the nation has been a key category for interpreting novels from the colonies. What Lukács does here is to show that national features of development can be incorporated into the analysis of the novel without presuming that the nation is the singular determiner of novelistic meaning – in other words, without the novel being always read as a Jamesonian 'national allegory': 'All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way … *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*'.[22]

Jameson's is an influential mode of reading the postcolonial novel, where nations and literary nationalism are the main categories used to interpret novels in the Third World.[23] This is also true of a new notable contribution to world literary analysis: Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*. For Casanova, the global South is steeped in literary nationalism, and writers need to emancipate the novel from national politics and produce autonomous literary forms in order to participate in the (anti-national) modernist universal of Paris (aka Joyce and Beckett). If Jameson goes to the Third World in search of a lost political novel, Casanova goes there to urge its nationally condemned writers to stop producing what amounts to nationalist realism. As Casanova puts it: 'Politicization in national or nationalist form – and therefore, in a sense, nationalization – is one of the constitutive features of small literatures: proof, as it were, of the necessary link between literature and nation at the moment when a country takes its first steps toward revolt and assimilation.'[24] National politicization lies at the centre of her model: writers need to free themselves not only from the nation (which simply grips their imaginaries) but from any kind of politics as well, which simply ruins their artistic autonomy and puts them in a position of dependency in the world republic of letters. An a-political modernism is the route to literary independence and global authority. Realism is the form of literary dependence and national-political capture.

There are several problems with Casanova's model, including her elevation of modernism as an (or the sole) emancipatory global aesthetic. In the Palestinian context, modernism is symptomatic of, yet resistant to, the failure of the possibilities of both political and human emancipation, and it is, in fact, realism that is strongly connected with emancipatory desires. What is compelling in the context of nation and novel here is that Casanova replicates Jameson, but in reverse: the national allegories he celebrates, she denigrates. Yet both share the same understanding of the novel form as necessarily a vehicle of nationalism. Both over-determine the novel by nation, and shun other categories like capitalism and class from their main equation. As Aijaz Ahmad has argued in his critique of Jameson: 'there *is* a very tight fit between the Three World Theory, the over-valorization of the nationalist ideology, and the assertion that "national allegory" is the primary, even exclusive, form of narrativity in the so-called third world'.[25] In Lukácsian spirit, Ahmad shows that the nation cannot be reduced to nationalism; that nationalisms are constituted by different forms of historical development; that their forms and ideological content differ (and could be, as Lukács emphasized before, either regenerative or reactionary), even as they insist on national unities; and that if the aim is to understand its cultural and historical specificity, a

materialist understanding of the so-called Third World would have to analyse it in categories similar to the First and Second Worlds. This is not to deny nationalism its ideological and cultural force, but merely its exclusivity and primacy as the source of narrativity. It is, indeed, to insist on situating both the nation and the novel within determinate social and historical formations and contradictions, as Lukács' project shows.

Such an emphasis is consistent with Marx's own understanding of nation and nationalism. As Erica Benner has shown, 'Marx certainly did not regard all forms of nationalism and national identity as equally alienated', and never suggested that 'the abolition of classes must be accompanied by the dissolution of those features of nations which are not genetically tied to class divisions'.[26] His critical engagement with the national question was more extensive and sensitive than his critics suggest, shunning both cultural relativism and oppression on a national basis. What mattered, as Benner explains, was the quality of self-determination (reconciling individual freedom with community) and whether its underlying values were emancipatory: 'self-determination for a colonized people cannot be achieved simply through the obdurate assertion of what has been suppressed by the colonizers. The real work of building a self-determining society must go beyond separatist politics of identity, and concern itself with advancing freedom and material welfare of people who, before the colonial era, had been demeaned and exploited by their own rulers'. Marx neither dismisses nationality nor subsumes it under class, but situates it in its historical specificity and relates it to the struggle for human emancipation.[27] Indeed, the culture and politics of the national question lie at the heart of Marxist preoccupations.[28] As Lukács clearly put it in his book on *Lenin*, the question is one of 'the rebellion of all the oppressed, not only the workers, on a universal scale'.[29]

In this regard, Jameson has recently qualified his use of 'national allegory' and emphasized that: '*National* in this usage referred to the historical moment of the construction of the nation in a given geographic space, that is, to the "cultural revolution" (whether bourgeois or socialist) in which a collectivity and a public – Gramsci's national-popular – was being produced.'[30] Now the national is situated both in a particular mode of production and at a specific historical juncture. Like Lukács, here Jameson is interested in the emergence of national sensibility and its impact on narrativity, marking textual moments when the private could symbolize the universal or collective. Jameson does actually delineate a (Lukácsian) materialist framework of comparative historical analysis in his own earlier essay, but he fails to see that it is inconsistent with his core claims. So even

then a materialist reading of culture and nation is certainly on Jameson's own horizon. As he states in a long footnote:

> Such a new cultural comparatism would juxtapose the study of the differences and similarities of specific literary and cultural texts with a more typological analysis of the various socio-historical situations from which they spring, an analysis whose variables would necessarily include such features as the inter-relationship of classes, the role of intellectuals, the dynamics of language and writing, the configuration of traditional forms, the relationship to western influences, the development of urban experience and money, and so forth. Such comparatism, however, need not be restricted to third-world literature.[31]

That, indeed, is the point behind a materialist project on the novel premised on the notion of historical specificity, as Lukács outlines in his *The Historical Novel*.

I show below how the basic validity of such a materialist approach can be extended and adapted to understanding the Palestinian novel. Before that, it is worth noting that the ground that Jameson outlines has been hard to sustain in the literary postcolonial field (and, in part, this explains my own turn to Lukács).[32] The nation has either been evaded or inflated as a sphere of analysis. A dominant poststructuralist strand has tended to deconstruct the nation, going either locally under it or globally over it – but never right *through* it as a politics of liberation and decolonization.[33] Notions of cultural hybridity, ambivalence, and indeterminacy sought to subvert the unities of nation-states and the political solidarities of anti-colonial struggle. The dominant trope here has been postcolonial migrancy-marginality. The truth of (post)colonial culture, it is posited, lies in the way it gives the slip to borders, boundaries, and stable identities, always regarded as repressive and monological. Homi Bhabha's postcolonial conception epitomizes this hybridizing trend. His contra-totalizing, contra-essentializing approach sees the nation 'as the measure of the liminality of cultural modernity', internally split between the pedagogy and performativity of the people (what is made as one and what is different), and temporally disjunctive, rather than dangerously and repressively coherent and unified. The nation's 'irredeemably plural modern space' becomes a source of a continually displaced anxiety. Against the cohesive limits of the Western nation, the exilic and marginal speak. This means that in its continual failure to encompass and represent, the nation reveals its own discursive self-making rather than (it seems) its power or sovereign reach. 'The nation is no longer the sign of modernity under which cultural differences are homogenized in the "horizontal" view of society. The nation

reveals, in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, an ethnography of its own claim to being *the* norm of social contemporaneity.'[34] As Neil Lazarus has argued: 'His [Bhabha's] general contention is that the problematic of nationalism is *exploded*, rendered both anachronistic and incoherent, by the questions that stem from any consideration of the situation of the marginal subjects of contemporary "postcoloniality".'[35] Marginality subverts nationality, and marks its instability as category and reality. The nation is always already (self-)deconstructed. Postcoloniality becomes a strategy of difference and ambivalence, suspicious of equality (homogenizing) and emancipatory collectives (repressive).

If nation is diluted and fragmented here, for another important strand in the postcolonial colonial field it has become all pervasive: the nation is present in every cultural product. Irish postcolonialism as cultural nationalism is a good example of such cultural identity and particularity. Here the problem is not an evasion of nation but an inflation of its cultural reach and literary presence.[36] As Francis Mulhern has argued in his critique of the Field Day anthology, Irish nationality has become the 'guiding theme' and 'decisive term' of this emerging strand of Irish criticism, 'scanning a society but dwelling mainly on the elements of a nation'. The reason lies in the critical intelligentsia's orientation towards Derry (the North):

> An unresolved national question encourages nation-centred cultural tendencies, yet principled, democratic response towards the one does not entail indulgence towards the other: certainly not in the South, where the valorization of Irishness as the main collective identity is more often than not repressive, and not even in the stalemated North, where the colonial aftermath has fashioned a society and a pattern of interests and identities more complex than tradition willingly acknowledges.[37]

Ireland is not only about Irishness, and Irish culture is not only about Irish particularity. Historical specificity is about determining what is unique and what is universal about Irish distinctions, not assuming that a people's history lies in cultural difference and particularity. There are aspects to Ireland that have absolutely nothing to do with Irishness, and others where the latter is absolutely essential. Assuming neither, while being open to both, is key.

Crucially, then, both cultural hybridity and cultural identity approaches have abandoned the pursuit of what Mulhern calls the 'principled, democratic response' to the national question. To determine what that is in every case, a clear distinction has to be made between political self-determination as a democratic self-governing right of an oppressed nation and ethnic or cultural nationalism. If the first claim can be defended on universal grounds, the second is a

form of identitarian particularism.[38] As political philosopher Omar Dahbour explains in *Illusion of the Peoples: A Critique of National Self-Determination*: 'Nationalism, in other words, is a specific type of claim to self-determination – it is not itself the very idea of self-determination, since there may be other reasons that can be given to justify the principle.'[39] From a liberal egalitarian perspective, the idea of defending against collective injury by fortifying exclusivity or ethnic particularity is flawed.[40] The whole notion of a liberal nationalism is, in fact, oxymoronic.[41] Positing cultural difference or cultural incommensurability as the basic criteria for resolving claims of self-determination jars against a universal application of democratic self-determination. Absent from postcoloniality, then, is the idea of the nation 'as the vehicle of a collective liberty, a mechanism oriented toward abstract common good or universal interests', as Peter Hallward put it in *Absolutely Postcolonial*.[42] As a result, a political understanding of anti-colonial liberation movements in which the nation is mobilized (and its content and meaning contested) in struggle is ignored.

This absence may explain why many postcolonialists misconstrue Fanon and his anti-colonial internationalism. A psychologized and inter-personal colonial encounter keeps out material and structural dimensions, turning Fanon into a prophet of colonial ambivalence or colonial violence rather than of emancipatory decolonization.[43] Postcolonial anti-humanism is not equipped to register Fanon's universal humanism, so it distorts it. Contra the cultural nationalism of negritude or a politics based on affective subversions or solidarities of difference, Fanon posited a socialist humanism founded on popular participatory and democratic struggle. The nation is forged as an anti-imperial and as an anti-capitalist construct, shunting bourgeois nationalism aside. The outcome is not just collective self-determination but individual self-realization as well.[44] This is a far cry from either radically 'splitting' and 'dissembling' the nation through a strategy of psychic ambivalence (as Bhabha does) or inflating its significance and reach. It also begins to suggest the historical ground that needs to be examined in charting both the culture and politics of emancipation in the colonies. Key here is to recognize the political significance of anti-colonial nationhood, as embedded in definite forms of property, without presuming nationality's explanatory primacy, either in aesthetic or cultural affairs.

Palestinian trajectories

History as mass experience and popular life, the existence of 'bourgeois revolution' and plebeian revolutionism, the oppressed as historical

subjects, and the broad emergence of national sensibility: these Lukácsian elements coalesce and intensify in the Palestinian revolt of 1936–9. Massive peasant revolt, urban mobilization, elite opportunism and weakness, lack of a liberation strategy, overwhelming odds against success, and ultimate defeat: all are constitutive elements that signify a whole cycle of Palestinian struggle against Zionist colonial dispossession and British imperial presence. They also coincide with the birth of a distinctly Palestinian literature that is at once contestatory and emancipatory. Let me delineate the history before drawing out the cultural connection.

Popular mobilization and self-determination (as democratic self-government) are indelibly connected. It is much easier to talk about popular anti-colonialism than it is to talk about Palestinian nationalism during the British Mandate. The mass peasant revolt was triggered by the killing of ʻIz al-Din al-Qassam, an Islamic popular preacher of Syrian origin from Haifa, who spent his years there organizing the landless, colonially dispossessed, and unemployed (the same constituency that initiated the revolt), and called for armed struggle against British and Zionist colonialism. If anything, al-Qassam signifies Islamic anti-colonialism rather than either Arab or Palestinian nationalism. The revolt itself was full of Islamic tropes like *jihād* and *mujahedeen*, though the demands were clearly universal: democratic self-government and an end to British colonialism and Zionist settler colonization.[45] What motivated the Palestinian peasants (who constituted the majority of the Palestinian population then) was not an idea of nationhood, nor a notion of Palestinian statehood, nor even middle-class warnings about Zionist desires clearly articulated in the press since at least 1908, but the material facts of dispossession. As a recent study has clearly established, peasants responded to wide-ranging processes of pauperization, landlessness, and dispossession that affected the majority of the Palestinian peasantry.[46] They mobilized against British policies and Zionist land expropriation that degraded their livelihoods and their chances of earning a dignified living.[47] For the majority of Palestinians, colonialism meant not just political domination and negation of self-determination but a dramatic human degradation. As Kanafani emphasizes in his pioneering *The 1936–39 Revolt in Palestine*: ʻagricultural life in the underdeveloped world, and the Arab world in particular, is not merely a mode of production, but equally a way of social, religious and ritual life. Thus, in addition to the loss of land, the Arab rural society was being destroyed by the process of colonizationʼ.[48] As a result, Palestinians felt on the verge of social and political destruction. As Kanafani states: ʻIn fact the real cause of the revolt was the fact that the acute conflict involved in the transformation of Palestinian society from an Arab agricultural-feudal-clerical one into a

Jewish (Western) industrial bourgeois one, had reached their climax.' This explains why the dispossessed peasants organized the biggest and longest anti-colonial revolt in inter-war imperial history and why Palestine became colonially ungovernable for such a long time. Combining both unarmed insurgency (one of the longest general strikes in anti-colonial history, mass demonstrations, civil disobedience, and boycott) and armed struggle, the peasants called for the end of Jewish immigration to Palestine, the end of land transfers to Jews, and democratic government. The suppression of the revolt ultimately required the largest British troop mobilization in British inter-war history, with 20,000 extra troops called in, the aerial bombardment of villages, and the wholesale destruction of urban neighbourhoods.[49] Over 5,032 Palestinians were killed, and 14,760 were wounded in a population of less than a million.[50] As Kanafani acknowledged, the road to 1948 was now open: 'Thus in 1947 circumstances were favourable for it [the Zionist movement] to pluck the fruits of the 1936 revolt which the outbreak of the War [in 1939] had prevented it from doing sooner.'[51] A totally disarmed and politically decapitated Palestinian society would find it difficult to defend itself against systematic Zionist expulsions in 1948. By force and terror, major cities were emptied of most Palestinians and hundreds of villages were destroyed.

Ghassan Kanafani makes two more important points: about class and about culture. First, he shows how the revolt was not only anti-colonial but anti-feudal as well. It included class struggle against the Palestinian feudal-clerical elite that had utilized popular discontent in vying for a better position for itself in the newly created British Mandate colonial regime – while the rebels wanted to abolish it. As Mona Younis puts it, the revolt reflects the emergence of mass politics in Palestine:

> The traditional leaders were considerably more at ease with pulling patronage strings from their urban bases than leading a national movement of the disinherited. Certainly, they had no conception of or interest in mass mobilization or organization. In fact, they were fearful of peasant and worker organizations that could potentially target them. Significantly, neither the general strike of 1936 nor the Great Revolt of 1936–39 were initiated by the elite leaders.[52]

With this new form of politics came new social demands. The revolt thus instituted peasant debt forgiveness and anti-elite measures, as Gudrun Krämer summarizes:

> Some measures revealed the rebels' marked sense of social justice and equality; not always was it combined with national sentiment. In the regions under their control, they proclaimed a moratorium on debt to remedy one of the most immediate causes of rural impoverishment, prevented tax

> collectors and creditors from entering villages and neighbourhoods, and declared all rent payments to be abolished. (Arab) landlords, businessmen, and moneylenders were not pleased.[53]

The result was a severe weakening of elite authority in the Palestinian countryside. In his important history of pre-*nakba* Palestine, Abdul-Wahab Kayyali even states that: 'The growing power of the rebels [in 1938] led to an exodus of thousands of rich Palestinians, land-brokers and pro-Government notables.'[54] Such processes explain the persistence of anti-feudal attitudes in Palestinian culture and politics. The effendis and notables would come to be blamed for the *nakba*. Never again would they play a prominent or leadership role in Palestinian politics.[55]

The revolt was also a turning point in Palestinian literature. Kanafani's second emphasis is mass revolt and the production of what he calls a 'popular culture' that defined itself against British imperialism, Zionist settler-colonialism, and Arab elite complicity and reaction. If Kanafani doesn't discuss novels in the 1930s, he shows how Palestinian poetry was at the forefront of registering 'the influence of the aggravating economic and political crisis on the literary movement'. And he adds:

> The development of a certain 'popular culture' was very significant: It represented a certain awareness that existed in the rural areas despite the widespread illiteracy, an awareness that was spurred by the rapidly developing economic and political reality. Popular poetry in particular reflected a growing concern on the part of the rural masses over the course of events. The spontaneous awareness led to a spirit of mobilization in the villages.

Poets and intellectuals broke from the social and ideological hold of the politically compromised notables and joined the popular struggle. 'We do not know', Kanafani states, 'of a single Palestinian writer or intellectual in that period that did not participate in the call for resistance against the colonial enemy' (13). The revolt, in fact, created what he dubs 'revolt-writers':

> Ibrahim Tuqan, Abu Salma (Abd al-Karmi) and Abdrahim Mahmoud were, at the end of the thirties, the culmination of the wave of nationalist poets who inflamed the whole of Palestine with revolutionary awareness and agitation … The work of these three, Tuqan, al-Karmi and Mahmud, displays an extraordinary power of appreciation of what was going on, which can only be explained [in Lukácsian terms] as a profound grasp of what was boiling in mass circles. What appears to be inexplicable prophecy and a power of prediction in their poems is, in fact, only their ability to express this dialectical relationship that linked their artistic works with the movement that was at work in society. (15)

For example, Abdrahim Mahmoud, who famously died fighting for his village al-Shajara in 1948 as he was reciting his poetry, reprimanded the Saudi Prince in 1935 with: 'Have you come to visit the Aqsa Mosque, or to say farewell to it before it is destroyed'. And Abu Salma would top anti-monarchic sentiments with: 'Liberate the homeland from the kings, liberate it from the puppets'; and 'We are the ones who will protect the homeland and heal its wounds' (17). Carried on by a surge of popular struggle, Palestinian poets participated in and represented the historical forces and contradictions of popular life. In that sense, Lukács' own features repeat themselves: mass revolt, writers' participation, portrayal of society in motion, and artistic composition as 'a reflection of the movement of basic contradictions of objective reality',[56] real communication, strong causality, etc. All these elements will come to mark the emerging Palestinian novel.

If the 1930s belonged to the poets, the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s would be shared with Arab novelists, as the novel comes into growing prominence in Arab culture. At the moment of its emergence in 1940s Palestine (I refer to the issue of dating in Chapter 1), the novel is clearly a product of a society in revolt against colonial conquest and expropriation, a society abandoned by a complicit local elite and by the imperially allied surrounding Arab regimes, and threatened with destruction. The pressure to respond to such a massive socio-political crisis distinguishes Palestinian history from the rest of Arab history and marks the Palestinian novel off from the Arab novel. No other Arab people faced both imperialism and settler-colonialism (as two distinct yet converging forces), struggled against both, and was ultimately defeated and forced out of its homeland into permanent exile and dispersion as a result. The Palestinian people's enemies were many, as were the distinctive problems of dispossession and exile it had to tackle and resolve.

The decade of upheaval that followed 1948 saw the over-toppling of one Arab Western-allied regime after another, and the political emergence of Arab petit-bourgeois, anti-colonial independence movements – with the ouster of Britain by Nasser in Egypt in 1956 and by Qassem in Iraq in 1958. The *nakba* ushered in a period of upheaval that would only end in the early 1970s, after the Arab defeat by Israel in 1967 and the ouster of the Palestinian resistance from Jordan in 1970–1. This led to a realignment of Arab politics in Egypt and elsewhere, and a shift away from the anti-imperial liberation moment towards US-backed Saudi regional dominance, emblematized by the change from Nasser to Sadat in Egypt, the re-legitimization of Arab authoritarianism in the October 1973 war, and

the emergence of the Lebanese Civil War in the mid 1970s. For Palestinian politics specifically, the end of this Arab revolutionary moment would lead to the rise of the (nationalist) statehood option as an accommodation to the new Arab status quo.

The Arab post-*nakba* novel is profoundly intertwined with this anti-colonial generation and its modernizing values, whether liberal, socialist, or feminist. The lesson that this generation drew from the destruction of Palestinian society and the dispossession and expulsion of the majority of the Palestinian people in 1948 was clear: modernize or die. This spirit is captured in what is often regarded as the bible of Arab nationalism: Constantine Zurayk's *The Meaning of the Disaster* (1948), written and published as the *nakba* was unfolding. If the intellectual and literary output of this period cannot be reduced to Zurayk's unificatory desires or his (at times) elitist nationalism, his work does convey the anxiety and will-to-struggle of a whole generation of intellectuals and writers, who understood the *nakba* as an occasion for self-criticism, self-organization, and deep revaluation. History as mass catastrophe shook Arabs to the core, and Zurayk felt it required a modern, organized Arab-wide response. That explains his relentless search for the Arab contemporary real: 'It is to be hoped that one of the good things to come out of this violent shock will be that it will return us to reality and rouse us to the facts of the situation, and help us properly to assess the matter and to make provision for it'.[57] Facing reality is key: diagnosing not just the external causes of defeat (the mightier power of the enemy) but internal weaknesses, defects, and corruptions as well (6).

How, then, to rectify the *nakba*? Through 'enlightened thought': 'to distinguish underlying causes from immediate ones, the essential from the contingent' (11). Thinkers have the responsibility, Zurayk maintained, 'for uncovering the roots of the present calamity and for frankly and strongly advocating their removal' (12). Unambiguously he was calling for a fundamental transformation in the Arab system, even its Westernization if that meant victory over Zionism: 'The reason for this [Zionism's] victory is that the roots of Zionism are grounded in a modern Western life while we for the most part are still distant from this life and hostile to it. They live in the present and for the future while we continue to dream the dreams of the past and stupefy ourselves with its fading glory.' In order to create 'a unified, progressive, Arab national being', what is required is 'a fundamental change in the situation of the Arabs, and … a complete transformation of their modes of thought, action, and life' (34). The answer to defeat is 'economic, social, and intellectual development' (37). Though he clearly

rejected 'class war' and Communism, he called for an 'internal revolution' and urged the new nationalists to break the 'monopoly of Communism' over the struggle 'against reaction and exploitation' and themselves 'struggle against the chains of the past, revolt against exploitation, and grope for the roads to progress wherever they may be' (38).[58]

What prospects for the newly arrived Jewish immigrants in Palestine (an issue I shall examine with each writer)? Zurayk had a clear answer. Shared common life with the Arabs. Politically, he argued, the imperially supported partition of Palestine was a violation of the Palestinian right of self-determination, a 'sacrifice of right and principle' for 'power and interest' (66).[59] In order to rectify this overpowering of right by might in world organization, he called for a democratic state in all of Palestine in which Jews 'will enjoy the same rights and duties as the Arabs' (73). This, he concluded, was consistent with the notion of Palestine as historic home of 'lofty human values and noble principles which emanated from it and illuminated the whole world', concluding: 'It is indeed an Arab crusade carried on to guard the independence and existence of the Arabs, but in addition – in fact I will say first and foremost – it is a human crusade of universal significance which will, I hope, continue to further the positive tradition of Palestine by imparting sound values and by defending principles, freedoms, and basic human responsibilities' (74). Palestine as a human cause, not merely as national struggle, would be the emblem of a new principle of world organization: universal rights. A new ethics of international co-existence is articulated here, where peoples 'do not infringe on the liberty and rights of other peoples' and where 'peace and justice' overcome 'oppression and continuous war' (56).

The worldview of a whole generation is articulated here: internal critique; new just social and political foundations; an anticipatory and forward-looking outlook. Out of the ashes of the *nakba*, intellectuals must search for the forces of justice and enlightenment. Samah Selim charted the social composition of what was, in fact, an Arab-wide phenomenon, with specific reference to Egyptian novelists:

> These young men and women belonged to the urban and rural *petite-bourgeoisie* … Unlike the landed intellectuals of the ancien régime, however, their social affiliations and political aspirations were rooted in the lower and middle strata of Egyptian society. Their aim was not so much to join the establishment and to reform it from within as to reshape it fundamentally from without. It was this class of intellectuals in a putative alliance with the downtrodden Egyptian masses that now claimed for itself the role of the vanguard of the *Nahdah* [renaissance] in Egypt.[60]

Chapter 1 is dedicated to showing that Jabra belonged to that educated, modernizing, and emerging generation that wanted to overhaul the Arab world and rid it of dependence, economic backwardness, and stifling social customs. One might be referring to Jabra's *Hunters in a Narrow Street* (1960), or his *The Ship* (1970), or *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978). To redeem the loss, individual self-sacrifice becomes the main trope of collective renewal. For Jabra, in Christian allegorical manner, the dispossessed, rejected stones become the agents of collective transformation, washing away the sins and oppressions of a whole society. Baghdad-set *Hunters* registers his mode of response to a whole post-*nakba* period of increasing Arab hope and possibility. As the novel's final image emphasizes, agents of social justice are sacrificing themselves for all round good: 'In the long months that followed, while we waited, while the Adnans and the Husains and the Taowfiqs impaled themselves on rows of political and social swords, the crows and the kites in squawking formations flew over the palm groves of a slowly refurbished land.'[61] Lukács would have recognized his crucial realist components here: middling heroes who embody the historical and collective processes of society in their private life; intellectuals impacted by popular struggle; and an understanding of the basic contradictions of objective reality. I trace Jabra's distinct trope of self-sacrifice from its emergence in his pre-*nakba* anti-feudal Promethean *Screams in a Long Night* (1946) to its crystallization and ultimate weakening in *Walid Masoud*. Charting the fate of self-sacrifice is the best way to access Jabra's changing aesthetic priorities: from the realism of *Hunters* to the emergence of modernism in his 1980s novels.

As I argue in Chapter 2, Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* (1963) also grapples with the post-*nakba* despair and the trials of refugeedom in Zuraykian spirit, by critiquing and shaking up a whole guilty and corrupt society, with its masculinist fantasies of virility and past glories. Kanafani's is a damning novel of Arab impotence and Palestinian nostalgia meant to motivate his readers into action – even as he reflected their despair at the passing of ten long years since the *nakba* without the prospect of return coming any nearer. It is not a passive reflection of reality that Kanafani sought, but instigation against injustice. With the rise of the Palestinian resistance movements and their political explosion on the scene after 1967, Kanafani overcomes his despair about actual possibility and captures the whole historical contradiction of Palestinian and Israeli existence in *Returning to Haifa*. Unrivalled in Arab fiction in its simple and stark realism, *Returning* charts a dramatic Palestinian–Israeli clash over the reality of the *nakba*. For the most part, the confrontation is moral: the clash of

a dispossessing occupier and his victim. With one significant twist: the occupier of the house which the main protagonists lost in 1948, who also 'inherited' and brought up their son, is a holocaust survivor, who immigrated to Palestine not out of Zionist imperative but for the most basic human need for shelter. Here humanization jars against nationalisms. Middling heroes clash, as new Palestinian realities are confronted head on. The resolution? A universal morality of justice and mutuality – even as armed struggle is invoked at the end. I discuss Kanafani's novel in the context of his revolutionary ethics and political project, and convey the universal translatability of Palestinian revolt by considering Jean Genet's *Prisoner of Love* at the end.

Chapter 3 provides another crucial example of the ultimate middling historical hero of this period in Habiby's *The Pessoptimist*. Marked by his exceptionality as a returnee to 1948 Haifa in the midst of his people's forced departures, he embodies historical contradiction in his being: a Palestinian left behind after the founding expulsion of the dispossessing Israeli state; a unique remnant that daily relives the whole tragedy of dispossession, amputated from both the Arab and Palestinian worlds. Capturing both collaboration and challenge, subservience and confrontation, the *Pessoptimist* is not only a tribute to Palestinian Communism, burdened as it is by Stalinist policy and the guilt of (partially forced) political complicity, but is also a tribute to its efforts at collective preservation and struggle. Here again historical processes and basic contradictions are portrayed, as popular life is staged and narrated in what I argue is, in this case, a Jameson 'national allegory'. Habiby's unrivalled innovation achieves realist effect through fantasy. The novel pierces to the heart of 1948 Palestinian reality by using elements of other-worldly fantasy and invention: figures from outer space rupture the burden of the real and convey the main protagonist's wish for redemptive messianic intervention.[62] As the novel insists on the power of culture and literary production in the struggle for self-emancipation, Habiby's realism is literally stretched to the limit and (crucially) back again.

Chapter 4 shows how for Sahar Khalifeh realism and rebellion go hand in hand in her novels set in occupied Nablus. I delineate Khalifeh's 'panoramic realism' and her conception of emancipation as collective and individual self-realization under the distinct (from exile) temporality of the Israeli occupation. I trace her response to the 1967 defeat and its radical aesthetic and political articulations: from her pioneering *We are No Longer Your Slaves* (1974) to her working-class *Wild Thorns* (1976), and, finally, to her feminist *Sunflower* (1980). With Khalifeh, a robust realist project

blooms as she maps out self-transformatory historical potentialities that coalesce in the first year of the *intifada*.

The main point of these chapters is clear: realism and emancipation are born together in the Palestinian novel. Rather than seeing realism as complicit with imperialism, postcolonial critics are again reconsidering the generative and redemptive potentialities of the realist novel in the colonies and the historical role and viability of realism. As Joe Cleary has argued, 'postcolonial studies has privileged modernist-associated terms such as hybridity, polyphony, pastiche, irony, and defamiliarization rather than realist-associated conceptual categories such as historical transition, class consciousness, and totality. Ultimately, this has had a detrimental effect'.[63] This is especially so because realism is quite simply a constitutive anti-colonial form. Aijaz Ahmad has recently emphasized the 'generic Realism' of all major writers from the Third World (including the Indonesian Ananta Toer Pramodya and the Egyptian Naguib Mahfouz).[64] In Simon Gikandi's terms: 'Realism was indispensable to nationalist desire; it was a strategy of giving the imagined nation a reality effect that would rescue it from the phantasm of the colonial library evident in such novels as Kipling's *Kim* or H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and *She*.'[65] Whether as an aesthetic philosophically associated with justice or as a new postcolonial version of 'realism in the colony', the poststructuralist prejudice against realism as a naïve, aesthetically and representationally unsophisticated, and politically complicit literary form is finally being challenged.[66] As Pam Morris' *Realism* argues, realism is unrivalled for its democratizing and historicizing intentions and methods, and for its commitment to a whole Enlightenment tradition of knowledge and truth. Morris may well be speaking of Habiby or Kanafani here. The Palestinian example thus supports this emerging locus. Individual and collective salvation are interconnected and integrated into the same progressive humanist narrative.

The crucial question to examine is when does this narrative coherence and causality fail? When does disjuncture and disconnection between public and private begin? For Lukács, this happened in 1848 when the novelistic form lost its capacity to capture objective reality and began to turn in on itself (I shall return to the question of what I see as the persistence of realism in the Palestinian novel, contra Lukács, later).

Chapter 5 is dedicated to exploring this new conjuncture in the Palestinian novel, where I mobilize Adorno to explain the rise of Palestinian modernism as the liquidation of individual and collective agency. In the history of the Palestinian novel, one example captures the whole process of narrative and social disintegration that comes

to define a new mode of representation: Jabra and Munif's jointly authored *World without Maps.* The novel stages its inability to find meaning and coherence even as it continues to actively search for both. Gulf oil dominance and the Lebanese civil war, which entangled the Palestinian resistance, speak of the same new truth: emancipation is over, and death touches all.[67] If Jabraesque self-sacrifice was essential for collective renewal in his earlier work, here it is essentially meaningless. Love, no longer redemptive, fails: it becomes a mode of mutual oppression rather than mutual fulfilment. Individuality is no longer possible as part of a productive community, and merging a form of self-denial. A stagnating and oppressive collective thus destroys the private sphere and muddles the subjective. If community had been forged in struggle before, now it is forged in death and mourning. This emphasis intensifies in Jabra's *The Other Rooms* (1986), and works itself unevenly in Khalifeh's anxious *intifada* novel *Gate of the Courtyard* (1990), which ruminates on potential failure in her unique realist mode.

A discussion of Palestinian and Arab modernism needs to begin here – with the failure of a collective project for emancipation. Kamal Abu-Deeb in his 'Cultural Creation in a Fragmented Society' would dub this state of fragmentation 'the collapse of the progressive collective vision and project and the disappearance of the future as a possibility for fulfillment'. Now coherence and meaning are to be found in the past, explaining the rise of religiosity for Abu-Deeb. Zurayk's earlier anticipatory, modernizing orientation disintegrates, and the emancipatory consensus collapses. As for the novel, Abu-Deeb puts it in no uncertain Lukácsian terms: 'Nowhere do we see meaningful structures, structures imbued with totality and wholeness. On the contrary, we see total fragmentation.' And the crisis touches all forms of cultural production:

> the absence of the individual heroic act; of well-formedness; and of totality, wholeness, and the integrated self are as evident in the creator, the poet, the novelist, the dramatist, the thinker, and the painter, as they are in the character in and the total structure of the novel, or the character in a play or in a short story, or the 'voice' in a poem, or the composition of a painting. For, on this level also, we see the disintegration of character, the absence of center, of wholeness, of totality, of integrated structures.[68]

What a difference a couple of years make. How might we account for this shift? Primarily in the failure of the Arab and Palestinian revolution and the 1967 defeat. If the Palestinian revolt and the *nakba* produced a political and literary realism, the 1967 defeat ultimately created the conditions for an Arab modernism (which takes hold by the late 1970s, as *World*

without Maps shows). It appears as a consequence of the contradictory moment that was 1967, the result of both Arab defeat and the emergence of Palestinian political armed resistance as a popular alternative and as part of a wider Arab radical response to defeat that was contained and crushed by the Arab forces of reaction and accommodation with Zionism and imperialism.[69] Interiorization and a relativization of perspective govern this new aesthetic mode, as atomization replaces connection, meaningful collective struggle, and emancipation.

At this juncture Edward Said's comments about the 'formal instability' of Palestinian fiction ring true. If the following description does not apply to the realist Palestinian novel of the revolutionary conjuncture (or to Sahar Khalifah's realist project), it does apply to the fiction that captures the moment of political fragmentation and defeat. Its tenor marks Said's mournful *After the Last Sky*, written after the end of what he calls 'the Palestinian narrative'. Here he discusses Palestinian narrative form: 'Our characteristic mode, then, is not a narrative, in which scenes take place *seriatim*, but rather broken narratives, fragmentary compositions, and self-consciously staged testimonials, in which the narrative voice keeps stumbling over itself, its obligations, and its limitations.'[70] Such modernist language is consistent with Said's comments in *The Question of Palestine* about how Palestinian writers 'record the Kafkaesque alternation between being and not-being *there* for Palestinians, whether inside Israel or in the Arab world' (153) and his description of Palestinian existence as 'cubistic, all suddenly obtruding planes jutting out into one or another realm'. However, this 'wildly multiple Palestinian actuality' took a cubistic narrative fictional form only after revolutionary defeat.[71] The earlier novel captured revolutionary promise in literary realism. Only after the defeat of that promise does the tonality of disintegration become pronounced in the Palestinian and Arab novel, and Said's cubistic metaphor becomes pertinent.

The shift is noted in Said's general comments about the onslaught of Flaubertian disillusionment in his preface to Lebanese Halim Barakat's *Days of Dust*. His reflection on Elias Khoury's civil war novel *Little Mountain* confirms this as well: 'And above all, form is an adventure, narrative both uncertain and meandering, character less a stable collection of traits then a linguistic device, as self-conscious as it is provisional or ironic.'[72] If Said reads postmodern elements here, the modernist yearning for shattered unities is too strong to ignore. An Arab literary-philosophical renunciation of the grand narrative of collective emancipation, the main feature of postmodernist sensibility, is more a

feature of the 1990s than the late 1970s. None of the Palestinian novelists in this study ever get there. The modernist remembrance of lost collective potentialities and anticipations constitute even the deeply self-reflexive last novels of Habiby in *Saraya, The Ogre's Daughter* (1991) and Jabra in *The Journals of Sarab Affan* (1992). The burden of past historical injuries and contemporary denials are far too determining to allow for either cynical forgetting or narrative *play*.[73]

What is important to note here is that as a form modernism both captures and resists the rise of the new order, mirroring it and protesting against it at the same time. Like European modernism, Arab modernist work also 'brackets off the referent or real historical world, thickens its textures and deranges its forms to forestall instant consumability, and draws its own language protectively around it to become a mysteriously autotelic object, free of all contaminating truck with the real'.[74] It just does this for different reasons than in Europe. The Arab crisis of representation is a response to the defeat of the Arab emancipatory project; a resistance to the political values generated by oil regional dominance and authoritarian rule; and a push against the re-emergence of traditionalist religious assurances and authority. Art comes to mourn the loss of revolutionary conjuncture as it voices the loss of coherence, meaning, and truth in a cultural sphere increasingly marked by the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, where the present and future have to be redrawn according to the precepts and contours of the past. Living in the radical uncertainty of the present becomes a way of holding on to the increasingly beleaguered promises of modernity. As the Lebanese writer Hanan al-Shaykh put it in reference to her novel *Beirut Blues*, capturing a whole new historical-aesthetic moment initiated by 1967: 'I felt the reality I was writing about was fragmented; I wanted a form which in itself embodies this fragmentation.'[75]

A note on 1967 and realism is necessary here. Lest my utilization of Lukács' categories means that I implicitly agree with his argument that realism ends or disappears after defeat, let me clearly state that I am not arguing that realism ended after 1967 or after the collapse of the revolutionary conjuncture, and that *all* literature became modernist. Any cursory empirical survey disproves this: realism clearly persisted after 1967 and after Palestinian defeat. In the Arab context, for example, Munif's massive historical realist project begins after 1967 (and arguably because of it) and Salwa Bakr's plebeian realism blossoms in the politically reactionary days of Sadat, and in critique of defeat (without idealizing the Nasser period).[76] This is also true in the Palestinian context: Khalifeh writes

realist novels until today. How, then, to explain this mixed cultural and literary-historical reality?

These questions of history and literary form can be illuminated by a brief look at Raymond Williams' conception of culture as a complex and dynamic set of historically determined processes and formations. His 'dominant, residual, and emergent' conception, while avoiding the clear-cut stagism that Lukács' model of 1848-as-rupture falls into, retains the notion that culturally dominant forms can exist within specific conjunctures. What Williams does is bring power into the discussion of culture, and think about the changing role and weight of cultural processes within various social formations. This allows for past forms to continue as 'residual' and lived in the present (performing either alternative or oppositional work) without being deemed archaic or expired. And it also allows for new forms to emerge and express new experiences and new values without necessarily substituting for the existing dominant. As Williams explains:

> What has really to be said, as a way of defining important elements of both the residual and the emergent, and as a way of understanding the character of the dominant, is that *no mode of production and therefore no social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human* intention.[77]

Culture here is seen as both contestatory and incorporative, defined by power but not exhaustive. In other words: varied but 'with determinate dominant features'. What this means, for my purposes, is that the emergent as a category doesn't necessarily have to be connected to a rising class (as one of Williams' uses suggests), but can also refer to what he describes as an 'excluded social (human) area' that gains in visibility and impact as a result of new circumstances.

This helps explain the relationship between realism and modernism in the Palestinian (and Arab) context. Modernism emerges as a new form of literature in a literary field defined by realism, articulating defeat, and capturing a new reactionary form of Arab society. While realism persists, it too has to take account of this new situation of the retreat of praxis: represent it, register its effect, and develop under its sign. Whether or not modernism becomes the new literary dominant in the Arab world is a legitimate question but one that I'm not exploring in this study. What I aim to show is that at the moment when modernism actually emerges in Palestinian and Arab culture, it is realism that is the dominant form in the novel and that it persists even after 1967.

Dwelling politically on 1967 is worthwhile because in Arab and Palestinian culture and history, this date is as crucial as 1948. Zurayk's response to 1967 was to reissue *The Meaning of the Disaster*, which had marked the period after 1948, suggesting that his earlier treatises were as valid as before. Anis Sayegh's *Palestine and Arab Nationalism* (1970) advanced Zurayek's anti-imperial modernization project for a post-1967 in a compelling Arab nationalist manner.[78] With Sadiq al-Azm, theoretical innovation and class critique came to the fore. Though al-Azm's position in post-1967 Arab culture was not as central as Zurayk's post-1948, al-Azm does express the radical feelings generated by 1967 best. Rather than wallowing in Arab defeat, al-Azm kicks back against history in a revolutionary manner. That too is part of 1967: the immediate attempt to role it back by tackling the socio-political roots of the Arab crisis.

Equally committed to Arab independence, modernization, and renewal, al-Azm's *Self-Criticism after the Defeat* (1968) evaluated the crisis from the standpoint of the Arab exploited and working-class, opening up a class perspective on Arab defeat that Zuryak had earlier closed off. The political end of what can be dubbed a Zuraykian petit-bourgeois nationalist perspective occurred in 1967. Arabs and Palestinians now had a choice between socialist liberation or a gradual reinsertion into the imperial system. To achieve the national aims of independence and development, a deepening radicalization was in order. Otherwise, a return to imperial subservience would be inevitable.[79] As I argue in Chapter 2, A *Critical Study of the Thought of the Palestinian Resistance* (1973) is al-Azm's attempt to support such an option, and to urge the formulation of a revolutionary strategy based on transforming and democratizing Arab regimes rather than evading and accommodating with them at the expense of the Palestinian masses.

The Palestinian mainstream's failure to do so is acknowledged by Fatah leader Salah Khalaf. As he self-critically put it:

> Faced with a situation of conflict within a country, more often than not we opted to safeguard our relations with the regime in power at the expense of our relations with the masses who contested it. We thus neglected what should have been a guiding principle: Our real force would have derived far more from the sympathy we could have generated than from the support we received – and grudgingly at that – from the governments.

A real Palestinian revolution was not to be, as he concludes: 'So we came to be seen less as revolutionaries than as politicians.'[80] The desire of the Arafatian bureaucracy and Fatah elite to settle with the Arab regimes (in exchange for oil money) won out in the Palestinian resistance, leaving

revolutionary thoughts behind. Fatah's main preoccupation was land rather than liberation. As Arafat once put it: 'Our main problem is that of liberating our land, not liberating the human being. The real liberation of the Palestinian is his liberation from the humiliation of dispersion and loss, as an inevitable outcome of the victory of our armed revolution.'[81] Salah Khalaf explained Fatah's ideological and political statist preferences well: 'To understand our attitude, one must understand that every Palestinian aspires above all to a haven, however, miniscule, to a consulate he can appeal to when he considers himself injured or threatened.' If a state or an entity was the only thing left after the failure of revolution, then a state is what Fatah wanted all along. Statehood met its political aspirations. Under revolutionary conditions, pursuing statism entailed bolstering rather than undermining the Arab status quo. Historians of the Palestinian national movement agree on this point. Rashid Khalidi argues that: 'indeed as early as the 1970s in Lebanon, the PLO had become bureaucratized, and this process became more and more of a quasi-state and less and less of a national liberation movement'.[82] Yezid Sayigh establishes that: 'After joining the Arab regional order, the Palestinian national movement dropped its image as a vehicle for revolutionary socio-political change in the Arab world, to become another (para-)nation-state seeking its own interests with the confines of post-colonial Arab divisions.'[83]

Statism and revolutionary failure are deeply (if not causally) connected. Talk of a political entity or state is already talk of the failure of revolt, is already talk of the will to settle and accommodate to the existing constraints of the Arab order. Statehood here becomes the marker of defeat. Radicals at the time saw the connection between Black September, the crushing of revolutionary forces, and the rise of the statehood option. 'September: Counter-Revolution in Jordan', a pamphlet by a Palestinian left faction, articulates this widely perceived link as well as any source.[84] Kanafani, who was then editor of *Al-Hadaf* (the main journal of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine), understood this post-Black September period in those terms as well – as an organized effort to weaken the Palestinian revolutionary resistance in order to push the statehood option on the Palestinians, eliminating any danger to the Arab regimes and Israel. Statehood meant a victory for Arab reaction and Palestinian petit-bourgeois opportunism.[85] In the struggle between liberation and settlement lay the future of a whole Arab generation. In fact, 1967–71 was a fateful moment, as Hisham Sharabi noted then: 'The fate of future generations of Palestinians (and other Arabs), whether they are to live in freedom and independence or to be subjected

to neo-colonialism, may well depend on whether Palestinian resistance will develop in such a way as to make possible the rise of a movement of liberation capable of fulfilling its goals.'[86]

To read the Palestinian novel or Palestinian politics through the prism of statehood is in fact to repress the history of revolution, modernization, and cultural renaissance. In Palestinian politics, the statist option represents an outcome of the defeat of the revolutionary forces. The political and cultural rise of the Palestinians after the *nakba* was always about much more than statehood, and the shift from liberation to independence reflects a shrinking of political horizons and possibilities. Why should the novel be pushed into the same narrow box as Palestinian elite nationalist politics?

Another point needs to be made here in order to appreciate how unproductive statehood was for the Palestinian novelistic imagination. Faisal Darraj traced the negative impact of bureaucratization and statehood-in-exile on the Palestinian novelists who were close to the PLO. He put it in these stark terms: 'Perhaps when one turns to the volume of ["instigative"/"establishment"] novels, poems and short stories that appeared between 1970 and 1982, in particular, one will uncover the cultural poverty that pervaded the novel, the poem and also political thought.' Proximity to a bureaucratized national struggle led to cultural and political stagnation: 'In point of fact, the oppressive presence of the Palestinian political establishment – given to imposing criteria of allegiance to itself and disciplinary obedience, and having the capability to print, distribute and advertise – played a negative role in cultural and literary life by appointing a political authority, often ignorant of literary criteria, as the only critical authority.'[87]

What we know as the Palestinian novel (the works of Kanafani, Jabra, Habiby, and Khalifah) was written not only at a distance from mainstream Palestinian nationalism, but as a critique of its main political tropes, such as armed struggle and statehood. Khalifah's realist emancipatory work epitomizes this critique. *Wild Thorns* portrays PLO armed struggle as a flawed imposition on a Nablus locality more attuned to workerism and self-organized community. The closer one comes to official Palestinian political ideology the more distorted and propagandistic the novel becomes. Official nationalism is regarded as the bane of both political and imaginative freedom.

The real companion of the Palestinian novel, then, is the ebb and flow of revolution. Statehood comes to mark the shift to Arab reaction, degrading the social and intellectual freedoms associated with the rise of

the revolution. The revolutionary period itself deepens realism and generates the most famous and widely read Palestinian novels since 1948. With the emerging imperial restoration in the period from the early 1970s onwards – signified by King Hussein's Black September in 1970 and American–Saudi regional ascent – the window for revolution is closed, and a long and deep Arab political decay and disintegration takes holds. The Arab and Palestinian novel can only be understood within the context of such historical-structural changes. Only within that context can the shift from an emancipatory realism to the self-enclosed and privatized aesthetic of modernism be explained. As Sabry Hafez puts it in his aptly titled 'The Transformation of Reality and the Arabic Novel's Response': 'The hero who was eager to change the world became entangled in his own critical vision, besieged and unable to comprehend external reality. The structure became not one of plot and action but of probing the inner psyche of the character.'[88] The transformation, in other words, from Jabra's social and political challengers in *Hunters* and *Walid Masoud* to the nightmare of loss and terror in *The Other Rooms*. From hope and anticipation to death and oil in a world without maps.

This shift, I argue, has broad literary-theoretical implications. It raises questions about the nature of the novel in times of popular upheaval and mobilization. This is why I would return now to Lukács and Adorno. Their diverging theoretical and aesthetics preferences are many, with Lukács valorizing the representational and political capacities of nineteenth-century realism and Adorno valorizing monadic modernism as resisting art. If for Adorno successful art exists in a negative dialectic to reality, for Lukács all great art is characterized by the capacity to penetrate into the depth of objective reality in order to convey its dynamic forces and real contradictions: its essence and social relations.[89] Overemphasizing such distinctions, however, risks ignoring their shared conceptions. Crucially: revolutionary praxis was a key theoretical category for both, structuring their aesthetic preferences and historical analyses. While realism for Lukács is a revolutionary product, modernism for Adorno is art struggling against the closing off of revolutionary conjuncture. For both, aesthetics are ultimately determined by revolutionary capacity and potential: one celebrates it and the other mourns its loss. If anything, this is what my examination of the Palestinian novel since 1948 shows: the ebb and flow of historical possibility and its aesthetic mediation.

CHAPTER 1

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's self-sacrificers: realism, revolt and renewal

Making a case for Jabra as a realist is not without its challenges. He is deeply connected with what is associated with modernism in contemporary literary criticism: experimental narrative structure, individualized perspective, and stream of consciousness. His translations of the Adonis part of James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* in 1957 and, crucially, of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* lend credence to the argument that Jabra is a modernist.[1] Moreover, in the Arab world Jabra is associated with and at times has actively participated in much that is new in modern art: new artistic movements; new literary schools, such as expressionism and surrealism; and new critical approaches to literature.[2] His *Princesses' Street: Baghdad Memories* (1994) conveys not only his deep commitment to cultural renewal and challenge, but also his role in a whole process of Arab cultural modernization in Baghdad during the 1950s and 1960s.

My aim is to build on this notion of Jabra as a literary and cultural modernizer, but to do so in such a way as to disentangle it from the idea that he was a *practising* modernist. Even while Jabra introduced modernist writers and perspectives to the Arab world, only the development of historical and political circumstances surrounding the collapse of the Arab revolutionary conjuncture from the mid 1970s onwards allowed him to *become* a modernist novelist himself. Only then was writing interiorized for Jabra. Losing his hope for social action and radical transformation led to expressing a modernist sensibility of epistemological and representational crisis. Philip Weinstein recently dubbed this process of narrative disintegration as one of 'unknowing'. His *Unknowing: The Work of Modernist Fiction* shows how the notion of a knowable world is connected with realism and how modernism is associated with a process of unknowing in the work of Kafka, Proust, and Faulkner which conveys an end to Enlightenment-generated narrative assurances through the trope of shock. 'In their work, the narrative props that underwrite the subject/space/time drama of coming to know are refused. In the place of knowing, there

operates a dynamic of shock; in the place of developmental life-histories, there occur unmastered moments.'[3] It is crucial to determine when this actually happens in Jabra, rather than reducing modernism to the borrowing of technique.

For Jabra, the challenge to a meaningfully organized and comprehensible world comes in *World without Maps*. I map his journey up to that point and trace his trajectory from an emancipatory realist aesthetics to a modernist resistance to existent authoritarian restoration through a close reading of his earlier novels. I aim to show that realism is a fundamental part of Jabra's constitution in his *Screams in a Long Night*, *Hunters in a Narrow Street*, and *The Ship*. Modernist unknowing only begins to be prominent in the transitional *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978), gaining centre stage in *World without Maps* (1982), *The Other Rooms* (1986), and *The Journals of Sarab Affan* (1992). *Walid Masoud* is transitional exactly because it amalgamates realist and modernist tropes. It represents a culmination and an intensification (or even revolutionizing) of Jabra's realism (what Munif described as Jabra finally 'putting his hand in the fire of revolution') as well as a piecemeal, fragmentary, and perspectival text.[4] In Lukácsian terms, this novel captures the contradictions of historical development and change, even as it marks the emergence of disillusionment and the growing possibility of humanist defeat. Although *Walid Masoud* is not as strongly defined by soliloquy as (say) Virginia Woolf's high modernist *The Waves*, it resembles her work in the act of conjoining distinct and isolated individual monologues together into one unified text. Walid, the main protagonist, marks yet also displaces revolutionary desire, embodying both a unity and a radical self-questioning through his dramatic and unresolved absence. For Jabra, Arab writers should interact with society and 'reflect their times' like Balzac and Dostoevsky did: 'I want Arab writers to live with their characters, to struggle with them and argue with them, and through this to participate in depicting at least a part of that overwhelming process: the transformation of our society.'

Jabra's realism has distinct features: he is not a realist in the social realist mode. George Eliot's notion of 'social sympathies' and the extension of literary concern to the plebeian and the socially disinherited does not describe his representational method or its ethical imperatives of seeking value in everyday lived experience. What strikes Jabra about his poor Christian Bethlehem roots (that, he often said, he shared with Jesus) is not the facticity of its plebeian surroundings and poor dwellings but their transcendence. Jabra comes from the working class so powerfully evoked in his *First Well: A Bethlehem Childhood* (1987). Yet unlike (say) D. H. Lawrence in

Sons and Lovers, he chooses not to represent his early working-class milieu in his fiction – it remains conspicuous in its absence. Jabra's is a story of a British Mandate youth who comes out of the working class through Arab education and British scholarships to the United Kingdom and never looks back. What he kept of his early poor Christian roots was the motif of rectifying injury through the self-sacrifice of the anointed one, with one secularizing difference: Jesus takes the form of the modern vanguard intellectual, and collective salvation is achieved through the self-sacrificing artist.

Self-sacrifice chimed well with the post-*nakba* generation's feeling of social and political responsibility that manifested itself in Baghdad and Beirut in the 1950s. Jabra dubbed it 'the myth of redemption': 'They [the poets] started with Tammuz and Ishtar and went on to Christ the Crucified. They have seen themselves in the image of one or the other, confident that through their blood there shall be redemption and resurrection.' Jabra remarks in the same essay that T. S. Eliot's portrait of isolation is not for him or the Arab poet. "Through his J. Alfred Prufrock, T. S. Eliot says: 'I've measured out my life with coffee spoons."' The Arab poet may see how apt the image is – it is a lovely line – but he will not quite sympathize with the attitude. He would rather measure out his life with affairs with women, with prison terms, with shouts of joy or despair, with rebellions won and lost. Even in his loneliness, he is too involved with others to find the anti-hero of modern Western literature of any relevance.'[5] Not for him either is an inactive Proustian rumination on the past. After the *nakba*, action in the present and anticipation of a just future were more compelling for Jabra's generation of writers: 'It was history-conscious, humanity-conscious and, above all, freedom-conscious.'[6]

Art had to participate in (and in fact produce) social change. This is why Jabra compared the 1950s and Arab discussions about writers' commitment to social and political causes with the 1930s in Europe. This comparison illuminates Jabra's literary register and dovetails nicely with the emphasis on 'aesthetics and politics' which I have borrowed from that period of intense discussion about the role of art:

> Regeneration was no less moral and individual than political and national. The leit-motifs of the new writers were: freedom, anxiety, protest, struggle, social progress, individual salvation, rebellion, heroism. There was to be a commitment to humanity: a 'Third world' was being born and writers were its prophets. Altogether, there was something in the air rather akin to what had happened in England and France twenty years earlier, in the Thirties. Hemingway, a novelist of action, became belatedly almost as popular as Sartre.[7]

What is striking about this analysis is that Jabra makes the same kind of links here that Lukács makes in *The Historical Novel*. The liberation struggles of the Third World are producing a new humanist literature as preoccupied with social and political causes as the Popular Front period in Europe. The Arab 1950s mirrored the European 1930s. For Jabra, the 1950s also built on the poetic challenges that faced their Palestinian literary precursors of the 1920s and 1930s. Now the Arab novel joins the fray and articulates the humanist desires for freedom and regeneration. Jabra was at the forefront of this project. In the spectrum of positions on commitment, his analysis and self-conception was distinctive. He saw himself as a free rebel, and felt he should remain unencumbered by doctrine or organization. Fearing possible oppressions by the collective, he protected his artistic autonomy and sought to respond to the pressures of society at the same time. While distancing himself from the revolutionary left, he nonetheless celebrated a romantic form of rebellion and challenge: 'The rebel remains an undigested element: his concern remains with individual dignity and freedom whenever threatened, regardless of the source of such a threat.'[8]

It is clear, then, that Jabra's chosen literary 'types' and agents for regeneration are not George Eliot's disinherited weavers or poor peasants, but the rebel intellectuals who have emerged from poverty and seek to rectify the ills of society through self-sacrifice. Critics have dismissed Jabra's focus on intellectuals as bourgeois, even though he was far too interested in revolution and justice to fit under that label.[9] If Jabra's worldview was bourgeois, then it was clearly of the revolutionary sort: responsive to mass struggle and historical change. His artists and intellectuals are eternal rebels, clashing – as socialist-nationalist Munif said about himself – 'with society at gut level' and seeking to construct a new one.[10] Jabra saw his novels as critiques of the Arab bourgeois order. That remained his declared interest. Unlike Munif's or George Eliot's expansive representational span, he never veered from representing general social ills through the medium of artists and intellectuals. The artist was the vanguard of social change, and he believed that only art will lead to social advance and renewal. If both Eliot and Munif celebrate plebeian self-community as social change, Jabra sticks to artistic vanguardism. Artists die for the sake of wide-scale renewal. As Jabra's main character comments in *Hunters* when he comes across a peasant laden with sorrows and worries, it is on her behalf that he needs to change society. That is why his main protagonist in *Walid Masoud* says, 'I also rue the destruction of a world I can't save' (367; 280).[11] Emancipation is the work of individual rebels and intellectual factions,

not of the poor and downtrodden. Workers and peasants are absent from Jabra's fictions. His social tapestry is indeed constitutively narrower than the other Palestinian novelists I discuss. And this is a common complaint about his fiction: his characters are atypical (bourgeois) Arabs.[12] But Jabra rejects that, and his defence is worth considering exactly because his rebel types capture social and political causes and confront oppressions and un-freedoms head on. If anything, Jabra is a mixture of realism and messianism (I argue below). As he emphasizes in an interview he gave late in life:

> First: I want to be part of my age. I am not running away from my time … On the contrary, I want to be in the midst of this time. Second: I feel that I have the right to be a pioneer in this age, or I won't consider myself to have contributed something to this age. My connection to my society is that of a pioneer. From my understanding of history, thought, and literature, I see that the thinker, the poet is the herald of forces of the future. So my connection to my time and society is a futuristic one … But I have my roots too in my leap towards the future, and I want to understand these roots.[13]

This mixture may also be the reason why he isn't thought about as a realist in Arab letters, where realism looks like Mahfouz's lower-middle-class social world of *Midaq Alley* or Gha'ib Ṭu'ma Farman's Baghdadi poor in *The Palm Tree and Neighbours*, described as the first Iraqi realist novel.[14] Nor does Jabra's work resemble Abdel Rahman al-Sharqawi's socialist realism in *Egyptian Earth* (1954). If Jabra's realism is not fully Auerbachian in the sense of extending sympathies to socially subordinate classes and taking everyday reality seriously, like Munif and Khalifeh, he is a realist in this sense: constructing narratives of individuals consciously acting in a fundamentally knowable and changeable everyday reality.[15] That defines his core realist assumption, which remains effective in his fiction until history destroys it and forces it into crisis.

If Jabra can be accused of anything it is of conceiving of change in purely cultural terms. His culturalist strategy elevates art to become the sole universal agent of social change – hence the power of literary tropes and symbols in his novels.[16] Even Palestinian guerrillas are seen as embodiments of previously wished-for imaginative tropes, as if reality responded to Jabra's literary desires and granted him real historical rebels. 'The Palestinian revolution', he argued, 'is the answer to all the questions about what it is that writers and thinkers have achieved': 'The new man is the *fidā'i* [the self-sacrificer]: he is the latest incarnation/embodiment of the poets' idea of self-sacrifice that preoccupied them for twenty bitter years [after 1948].'[17]

To further understand the specific way in which aesthetics and politics are connected in Jabra, I trace the development and changing fortunes of his central notion of self-sacrifice. I examine its contours and efficacy, its unique conception of the relationship between individual and society, and its conditions of possibility. Born universal and Arab, with increasing defeats it becomes more and more Palestinianized (as in *Walid Masoud*) until it loses its centrality or disappears completely from Jabra's novels. I discuss why this is the case, and prepare the ground for the moment when the self-sacrificing mode collapses in *World without Maps*, ushering in the disjuncture between a private and public, the free individual and a free society, individual self-realization and collective self-determination. The shift from realism to modernism is registered in the changing fortunes of self-sacrifice. Its failure implies a world where social acts (through art) are becoming increasingly meaningless, and the artist's situatedness *in* community becomes precarious. Meaning and coherence are lost, and the struggle to retrieve them becomes ever harder. Inwardness and interiorization predominate in the late novels. Writing as an emancipatory social act turns into writing as witnessing under siege. A new order sets in: optimism and hope are no longer even distant echoes.

***Screams in a Long Night* (1955)**

A passing comment in Jabra's *Princesses' Street* looks back to his first novel *Screams in a Long Night*, completed in Jerusalem in 1946 and published in Baghdad in 1955: 'I then remembered the deprivation that I had experienced in my childhood and that, unconsciously at the time, I had not allowed it to affect my attitude to life' (160; 236).[18] It is a typical Jabra sentence. Controlled and measured, it reveals as much as it hides. Poverty and want are present, yet not over-determining; their (negative) effect is contained, seemingly surpassed by an act of will. Jabra's 'attitude to life' is constructed out of a different set of experiences than those of deprivation, a different domain, which here remains unspecified and unexplored. However, this domain clearly exists in order to guard against his early poverty. Jabra aims to go through life without allowing his past to constrain it. Yet suppression of the past is not his goal. After all, his first instalment of autobiography *First Well* evocatively and memorably describes the dire conditions of his childhood. What Jabra seeks is a productive transfiguration of his past, overcoming it both *for* and *through* art, as *Screams* clearly suggests. If art and intellectual production are Jabra's final objectives, they are also his means of freedom and self-possession.

Jabra's first novel could really be regarded as the first Palestinian novel.[19] Written in English, it was published in Arabic in Baghdad nine years later. Jabra began writing fiction and poetry in the 1920s in Arabic. His first published piece was a celebration of the Palestinian revolt of 1936 titled: 'Thawratuna al-Mubāraka [Our Blessed Revolution]'.[20] As a result of his sojourn in Britain and America on scholarships and his strong interest in Anglophone culture, he also began to write in English, especially since he felt Arabic was 'too wordy, too flowery' to convey 'the intensity of Arab experience'. The *nakba* changed all that. Arabic became a key instrument in tackling historical defeat and in modernizing the Arab world in response. It is worth quoting Jabra's link between 1948 and his own understanding of modernism in full. History, language, and aesthetic project come together here:

> After 1948, however, I decided that if the Arabic language was not the vehicle of our revolutionary thinking and expression, we would be defeating our purpose: change had to begin with the word and the image, however intractable the Arabic word and image might seem. I went back to writing in Arabic, this time with a difference. Together with a group of writers and artists of my generation I declared that modernism in the Arab world was a desirable corrective to the patterns of thought and expression that had reigned almost unchanged for much too long. Modernism meant belonging to ourselves and to our times at once, which for us could only be achieved by going back in our creative work to our roots and, at the same time, by incorporating into this world all the discoveries and techniques of the West.[21]

Jabra's new foundation for Arab culture is an amalgamation of present and past (especially those components that challenged power and authority). Merging Western technique with a radical Arab past becomes a way of inhabiting the present. In contemporary critical terms, Franco Moretti has dubbed this strategy 'a structural compromise' between 'western forms and local reality'. As Jabra clearly suggests, this strategy must incorporate local forms as well. In fact, Moretti's formula is triangular rather than a binary one of form and content alone: 'For me, it's more of a triangle: foreign form, local material – *and local form*. Simplifying somewhat: foreign *plot*, local *characters*; and then, local *narrative voice*.'[22] In Jabra's case, such an amalgam meant an Arabization of a Western form (and even of a novel he originally wrote in English) for the purposes of Arab cultural emergence and creative self-formulation. The freedom with which he could borrow, amalgamate, and self-represent is an important part of the story.

Even though Jabra shifted to Arabic in poetry and short story, his second novel *Hunters* was written and first published in English then translated into Arabic – a clear indication that he continued to put an onus on gaining a place in international culture using English not just Arabic. What is crucial, though, is his consistent purpose in writing: modernize in order to be free. Individual freedom and collective self-determination provided the means.

Screams launches this project. In the novel, Jabra carries through a narrative of individual development and transformation that is both fictionally original and aesthetically complex. He tells of the travails of writer Amin Sama‘ in ‘the city’, and of his painful struggle for self-fulfilment in art and love. The novel begins with a series of failed encounters in which conflicting desires cut short or rupture communication between the protagonist and other characters. Although the scenes are presented in quick succession, they evoke an atmosphere of heavy frustration. As he is walking to the centre of the city and hears laughter coming from a passing car, the first-person narrator must be reminded ‘that the world still has those who find pleasure in their life’.[23] The cause of his sombreness is unrequited love: his wife has suddenly left him. Miserable and disconsolate, he renounces women altogether: ‘I decided to have nothing but contempt for women until I became truly contemptuous of them. I have failed in my marriage, and I have no doubt that any other relationship with any other woman will only lead to disappointment’ (7). So he buries himself in work, writing novels in the morning, journalism in the afternoon, and helping ‘Inayat Yasser every night gather all the threads of her feudal family’s history. His only relief is novel-writing. It becomes, as he postulates, the only means for expressing his opinions and the contradictions of his multifaceted self. Writing is where things fall into place and ‘parts come to enhance the beauty of the whole’ (11). Amin Sama‘ can only make sense of the world through artistic production. Art expresses his alienation, and his attempt to transcend it. If art relieves his pain, it is also symptom of his continuing anxiety about life’s continuing failures, fractures, and disappointments.

By foregrounding the place and power of artistic production in social life, what Jabra does is nothing less than a modern revolution in Palestinian culture. Neither religion nor traditional social and political practices can help the individual make sense of life or find her place in society.[24] Jabra posits art in their stead, as a new mode of renewal and self-making, as, indeed, an instrument of freedom. *Screams*’ main narrative thrust testifies to the novelty of this new philosophy, which informs all of Jabra’s fiction.

What is the best way to describe Jabra's emerging philosophy? If his critical practice at the time is anything to go by, romantic-revolutionary would be accurate. For Jabra, art articulates man's unrelenting struggle for freedom. In fact, in his translator's introduction to Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, (which he begun in Jerusalem in the late 1930s and published unchanged forty years later), he clearly connects artistic-individual with national freedom. As Jabra shows, discovering the romantics in Palestine in the 1930s had a formative and lasting effect on him. In the romantics he found a clear connection between art and rebellion against the social order. Beauty, love, and freedom became indelibly associated in his mind, and expressed his own critical and political preoccupations in a Palestine that was then in the midst of a massive popular revolt against British colonialism. He therefore understood the 'yearning for freedom in its broad sense': both 'in its personal sense in harsh conditions of poverty and deprivation, and in its national sense in a period in which the Palestinian revolution continued against foreign occupation and the Judaization policies adopted by the British Mandate'. For both Shelley and Jabra, writing is connected to popular revolution and radicalism, and expresses what Shelley in his own preface to *Prometheus Unbound* calls in a post-French Revolutionary spirit: 'a passion for reforming the world'.

Referring to his readings in both English and Arabic (especially of al-Ma'ari's radical 'Epistle of Forgiveness', which celebrates reason and denounces hypocrisy), Jabra clearly articulates how essential the romantic poets were in forging his aesthetic-political orientation for years to come. They had, he continues: 'defined a path for my life and ideas that would save me from agonies and sorrows I had to comprehend and overcome, a path full for warmth for humanity, humanity for which God created the universe to make it happy, yet it remains immersed in misery'.[25] Knowledge, social injury, and a humanist orientation are all combined here to produce Jabra's key category which will inform his writing from this point on: self-sacrifice.

Jabra's typical romantic-Enlightenment logic, then, meant that the world had to be comprehended outside the constraints of ignorance, stifling tradition, and authority, and that it had to be questioned, challenged, and rebelled against through both action and art. And all this for the sake of the underdog, or Jabra's wretched humanity.[26] That is why Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* is so important for Jabra. What ultimately strikes Jabra about Shelley's Prometheus is his endless resources of challenge and endurance in the face of a brutal and tyrannical enemy, holding out and suffering in order to eventually allow humanity and nature to joyously

unite again at the end, where redemption, victory, and a virtuous society lie. The lessons Jabra saw for Palestine were clear. As Shelley himself explains, he reconstructed and remoulded the Prometheus myth in order to serve the pursuit of 'moral excellence' in his own contemporary society:

> But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary.[27]

Shelley provided a model of challenge for Jabra: there can be no reconciliation with injustice and tyranny. As David Bromwich argues about *Prometheus Unbound*, with the help of objective necessity, love becomes the foundation of future society: 'Asia and Prometheus by their love grow capable not, as they had supposed, of destroying an old tyranny – for that, Demogorgon must be the efficient cause – but rather of building the human order of freedom they have begun to experience in themselves.'[28] This, indeed, captures Jabra's whole aesthetic-political practice and worldview from *Screams* onwards. His *oeuvre* is a rumination on the problems of love and freedom.

Screams' own will-to-freedom is particularly apparent in the episode with Inayat's sister Rakzan. After she informs Amin that Inayat has died, she immediately decides to burn all her family's valuable books and manuscripts, and to cut her ties with the suffocating hold of the past. 'I propose to destroy the past' (85), she tells him, renounces her inheritance, and declares her commitment to the present: 'But what I want now is the present, I want a present that is alive and free' (86). Amin is surprised and initially saddened by her action, which threatens to throw him back into financial insecurity. In a mad but genuine proposal, Rakzan suggests they marry, thus 'liberat[ing]' him from the 'shackles of poverty' (87). As he leaves her mansion, a powerful sense of lightness and relief elevates his spirits. For the first time in years, he feels as free as he was during his childhood in the village. A powerful 'feeling of recovery' sets in: 'as if saved after being on the verge of suffocation' (99). His newly found capacity to live in the present manifests itself when he both shuns his returned wife's overtures and rejects Rakzan's new offer. Both acts signify his refusal to be subjugated to the past. Liberated by Rakzan's dramatic burning of her family's mansion, the end of the novel sees him walking down into the city centre wishing that its gathering masses will one day achieve their own freedom: 'It wasn't difficult for me, as I stared into their eyes, to realize that many had

the same wandering and aimless looks, just as I was for two long years … searching for an end of a long night and a beginning of a new life' (112).

Two tropes are worth emphasizing. First, the journey Amin takes at the end is into the city. There is no return to the country; his happiest moments there cannot be recreated. In that sense, Jabra shuns both nostalgia and romantic restoration. His romantic yearning is anticipatory, opting for action in a harsh and contradictory city over country escape. What the country gives him is a vantage point onto the city, which he dubs as his capacity of 'seeing progress from below': 'And thus we abandoned the hills, valleys, and orchids to the darkened/dark [city] neighbourhood with its tomb-like houses, overflowing latrines, and filthy air' (42). His earlier rural poverty gives him moral clarity in the city, and allows him to shun existential boredom as a literary and artistic disposition. Boredom does not exist among the poor and labouring peasants, he affirms: only the wealthy can afford to get bored. If Amin puts existentialism to one side as a philosophy and post-war mode of response to the city, he also rejects literary slumming and 'contemplating wretchedness' (43). In fact, Amin clearly states that the city's new creative artists are those who have experienced poverty but have managed to overcome it through artistic labour. Neither the old feudal class nor the new urban bourgeoisie are capable of generating such an original response to the city.

What the ending affirms, therefore, is the unique authority of the artist as a self-made man, independent of class privilege, and uncorrupted by bourgeois nihilism. Amin descending into the city is Amin taking on the challenge of the present and future. The arrival of a new generation of writers is proclaimed here: young, free from both poverty and wealth, and ready to make their own life. Their cultural principles are forward-looking, innovative, and experimental. Their political principles are broadly progressive and modernizing. But they also occupy a significant distance from active politics and public life. The novel does not explain how the masses, who remain voiceless throughout, will achieve Amin's type of freedom. Does Amin have an active role to play in their collective self-realization, or is he just an object of emulation? In an important poem Jabra wrote at this time called 'The City', the urban masses, suspended between 'sterility and illness', are liberated from death, pain, and want by a huge transformative storm.[29] Jabra leaves these questions unanswered in *Screams*, but he will return to them in his later novels. What is clear is that the new artist's journey of renewal is one that must be undertaken alone, in solitude. Amin even tells Rakzan as much when he refuses her offer of marriage: 'How wonderful your courage is! You blew up your palace, so you

saved yourself and me. But you have to search for your new life alone' (111). Amin protects his individuality out of fear that others may get in the way of his self-fulfilment. When others do come into play, it is as lovers or close friends. At the core of *Screams*, then, is the interpersonal sphere, and this remains Jabra's most prototypical site for solving social and political ills. Those remain visible in Jabra's work, but ultimately have to work themselves through the individual.

Although at times Jabra can push against the limitations of his own artistic individualism, as in *Walid Masoud*, he usually affirms and justifies it. This has led Muhammad Siddiq to emphasize what he calls Jabra's 'subjective aesthetics', which he sees as an 'attempt to reconcile contradictory ideological and aesthetic imperatives'. A limited representational mimeticism is combined with a strong lyricism for Siddiq: 'it should be noted that unlike the realistic novel, which insists on the illusion of representing external reality, the lyrical novel largely dispenses with this illusion in favor of representing the heightened awareness of private subjective sensibility'.[30] Siddiq thus emphasizes the ambivalence and uncertainty of Jabra's aesthetic. What I am arguing, though, is that Jabra's early novels are more strongly realist than the focus on subjective lyricism suggests. The lyrical is there to capture the contradictions and essence of a whole historical moment that preoccupies Jabra, and is never lost sight of. The exceptional self-sacrificing heroes are mediators of society, reflecting its problems and preoccupations, and trying to change it. This realist sensibility falters only when the self-sacrificing trope collapses, and with it the clear connection to society and history that Jabra posits in his fiction. To use Siddiq's terms, only then is an atomized 'private subjective sensibility' all that remains.

Before considering Jabra's second novel, two striking omissions from *Screams* are worth noting in this regard: the total absence of both Palestine and colonial threat. How does one explain the anomaly that the first artistically compelling Palestinian novel neither mentions nor invokes Palestine?[31] Why this omission, especially at such a tumultuous time in Palestinian history when revolts, strikes, and demonstrations were either still prevalent or in the recent past, and when Palestinian national life was threatened with extinction? This question is hard to answer with certainty although it may explain why it took Jabra so long to publish his first novel. If *Screams* is to be understood as Jabra's revolutionary-artistic manifesto, then the main point about it is that it declares the birth of a new artistic project. Collective redemption is realized *in-and-through* this emergent agency. That's why it was forged in the first place.

In one important respect, though, *Screams* deeply registers historical feelings: in its uncompromising rejection of Palestinian feudalism. Coming on the heels of the Palestinian revolt, this is not surprising. Anti-feudalism and an internal social critique were core processes in the late 1930s. As *Screams* shows, the shackles of a politically compromised and patriarchal class had to be burst asunder for woman and artist to share their common desire for freedom. Challenging women's subjugation is wedded to creativity and self-expression. Jabra's first novel is clear on this: his commitment to women's freedom is here declared in no uncertain terms. *Hunters* would gesture towards this as well when violence against women is condemned as morally repugnant. For Jabra, living in the present meant constructing a just society where individuals can freely self-determine. If anti-colonialism figures here at all, it works through this resounding anti-feudalism. The class that stifles the Palestinian voice and freedom, through its subservience and complicity during the British Mandate, is the same class that lost Palestine in 1948. During the next ten years in the Arab world, its death knell would sound from one Arab capital to another, beginning in Cairo and Baghdad.

Hunters in a Narrow Street (1960)

After the *nakba, Hunters* launches two decades of Palestinian writing that brings the Palestinian novel into its own in the Arab world as an aesthetic of exile, dispossession, and challenge. Palestinians became (as Jabra urges) hunters for Arab and Palestinian freedom, justice, and homeland, which were on the political horizon. The world seemed transformable and collective organization possible. The Arab novel since the 1950s captured and shaped this coalescing 'enlightenment', as Faisal Darraj put it: 'Those novels were connected to the social multiplicities and inquiry which took place during the popular liberation struggle movements as expressed in various forms, such as in the press and the political and collective dialogues. This means that the Arabic novel was being formed during a new social period, relatively unprecedented, and removed from existing political and cultural rituals.'[32] *Hunters* epitomizes this new society.

Palestine surfaces, ruptures, and disrupts Jabra's narrative both as memory and as one of the main compulsions behind an Arab modernizing project. Jerusalem is mentioned within the first few paragraphs in *Hunters*, and it takes only one section for Palestine and 1948 to explode into the narrative.[33] The arrival to Baghdad of Jameel, the near-penniless

narrator, is emphasized as part of a dispossessed refugee's forced search for livelihood:

> I, however, on that first day of October, 1948, felt little exhilaration and less excitement on my arrival. It was not because I had seen London and Paris and Cairo and Damascus. I had forgotten my travels and could not remember what any city in the world looked like – any city, except one. Only one city did I remember all the time. I had left a part of my life buried under its rubble, under its gutted trees and fallen roofs, and I came to Baghdad with my eyes still lingering on it – Jerusalem. (7)

If in *Screams* the past is either cherished or discarded, here it always intervenes and erupts into the narrative. Past determines present and mediates Jameel's Baghdad experience. Jerusalem, initially a site of family achievement and romantic entanglement and promise, becomes a site of national displacement, impotence, and weakness: 'Jerusalem was an embattled city. The most unorganised, the most unarmed collection of volunteers, trying to stop the fanning out of a highly organized, well-armed and ruthless force: a few erratic bullets against mines of gelignite' (10). Jabra's description of the *nakba* is steeped in biblical allusion and comparison. Bethlehem is 'the city of joy and peace' and is through 'a diabolical irony' transformed into 'the scene of our ill-equipped defiance of hate' (11). Bethlehem becomes an incarnation of hell, and its inhabitants become eternal sufferers. Jameel's description is worth quoting in full to show the magnitude of social dissolution and despair:

> And time dragged and sorrow came upon sorrow without relief. Despite all our fears we had preserved a little hope, but each new day ate further into our hope. It was a war, we were told. It was the greatest practical joke in the world, and the most tragic one. There were armies; there were guns; there were generals; and there were strategies; there were mediators. But the dislodged and the dispossessed multiplied. There was a truce, yet the refugees came in greater numbers. They carried their rags and their bundles, and buried their children unceremoniously under the olive trees. Amidst the wild flowers rested the torn pieces of flesh, human and animal inextricably twined. In the spacious courtyard of the Byzantine Church of Christ's Nativity slept a tangled tattered mass of peasants and mules and camels, and only the braying of asses was louder than the hungry crying of the children. (11)

As hope fades and sorrow multiplies, action becomes futile. A tragedy slowly unfolds, inescapable and all-enveloping. Hope turns into 'agony': 'Rumour was news. Wishful thinking was argument. Jerusalem

would be internationalized, the Jews would soon be defeated, the United Nations would certainly enforce its decisions. More houses had been blow up. More villagers slain' (13). The tempo and persistence of destruction are overpowering, crushing agency and self-possession: 'We were in the hands of superior powers who organised the fight and relegated us to a useless background' (13). Jameel is completely disempowered and impotent. 'We were not allowed to fight – we had no ammunition, and nobody wanted us. The monotony, that repetitious ever-widening emptiness, was as devastating as the carnage itself' (14).

Jerusalem in 1948 becomes 'Gehenna, the city of no peace' (17). As Jameel states during his discussion with Father Isa, the West's fanciful image of Jerusalem as the kingdom of heaven is abstract and false. In the face of the West's complicity with Zionism and collusion in the unfolding of the Palestinian catastrophe, Jameel holds up a Palestinian Jesus and an Arab Jerusalem. His native perspective, however, is complex and nuanced. Jabra's appropriation of Jesus cannot be read as a rejection of everything Western. In a typical Jabraesque twist, the local is mediated and tempered by a prototypical Western text. Dante's *The Divine Comedy* is clearly utilized in his description of *nakba* as hell. Jameel's wished-for journey, in fact, resembles Dante's own: from inferno through to purgatory and, finally, to love and paradise. Only love can redeem the *nakba*, as Jameel's brother suggests:

> 'Remember,' Yacoub said when the car was about to start on its long desert journey, 'life is resilient. Give it another bounce.'
> 'Not through further treachery, I hope.' I said.
> 'Through further love, Jameel. Farwell! And send us some money when you can.' (18)

Like all of Jabra's Arab cities, Baghdad would endlessly stage love's redemptive promise, even revolutionary potential. *Walid Masoud* is dedicated solely to this paradigm and fully explores the full transformative potential of love as justice. In *Hunters*, the inferno is still being revisited and relived, and love is ultimately deferred.

Hunters' Baghdad is an uneven city – neither an extension of the desert, nor independent of it; neither free politically nor totally oppressed. It is a city in tense conflict between a powerful repressive (semi)feudal monarchic regime and emerging urban constituencies. As Hanna Batatu argues in his monumental *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, Baghdad then was

> throbbing with a vigour long unknown, a middle class in continuous growth and already intensely articulate, a modern education still meagre in content but extending in bounds, paved roads, railroads, and air services gradually spanning more and more of the country, a commerce still hesitant but in a lively mood – all this coexisted with a newly born, artificially isolated structure of vast semifeudal estates.

British supported tribal sheikhs made 'common cause' with a colonially protected monarchy and faced off threats from 'the growth of the intensely leftist or intensely nationalist intelligentsia allied with the urban masses'.[34] Baghdad, as a result, was a breeding ground for intense paradoxes, as Eric Davis states: 'The period between 1945 and the 1958 Revolution constitutes the most active and participatory era in twentieth-century Iraqi political, social, and cultural life.'[35]

As a college professor, Jameel is at the centre of this historic moment. His sympathies lie with the rising tide of youth, yet his job and livelihood depend on their much more powerful oppressors. As a result, Baghdad is an ambivalent space, a site of unresolved, nagging contradictions. It is decaying, hellish, and stagnant, yet on the verge of an oil boom and social change, and throbbing with life and promise (36). Jameel feels both 'melancholic', nostalgic for Jerusalem, as well as 'bewitched' by Baghdad's street energy and street life (33–31). Crushed by the resurfacing past of lost love and lost homeland, he still wants to know everything there is to know about his new place of refuge. Nowhere is the conflict between rulers and ruled made clearer than when arch-conservative and ex-government minister Imad Beg, whose confined daughter, Sulafa, Jameel tutors and slowly falls in love with, says: 'The fear of God and the fear of authority, that's what we need. Mosques and police stations. We are a very difficult people, Professor – very difficult. Mosques and police stations are the only medicine for our sickness.' For Jameel, imprisoning society in this way stifles initiative and kills creativity. He appeals to Imad Beg by recourse to art: '"You don't want a whole race of sheep, sir, do you?" I asked. "Poets like Hafiz, if we hope ever to have them, are not bred by sheep, are they?"' (102). Imad roars with laughter in response.

Does Jameel really believe that art can have the capacity to sway a regime from repression and brutality? *Hunters* constantly stages how deeply intertwined questions of art, liberty, and freedom were in Iraq of the early 1950s. Jameel's closest friends are either writers or poets; and their debates about art, politics, and social change rage throughout the novel, even as political surveillance stifles and silences. Cafés become arenas for cultural and political clash and conversation. Such conversations

evoke the social and cultural milieu of intellectual Baghdad in the 1950s. The restless dynamism of a whole generation is conveyed here evaluating its present-day predicament and arguing over the road ahead. Memories of failure and defeat, and questions about effective modes of change, are constitutive to this moment.

As in *Screams*, arguments between advocates of existentialist commitment and free art erupt. If Jameel and his friend Adnan reject the notion of art having to be 'true to life', their interlocutors argue for an art which is 'the voice of the people':

> The poet should worry about the ailments of his people and suggest a cure for them and tell them a great future awaits them all.
>
> 'Our problem, he continued, "is how to harness the arts to the cause of the poor and the ignorant. The blight of our literature has been this excessive futile individualism of authors who remove themselves from contact with the people."' (76–77)

For Adnan, such sentiments have only produced a mediocre literature which 'wallow[s] in antiquarianism' and traditionalist delusions, dragging it down to the level of 'a public with a modicum of literacy such as ours' (78). Jameel agrees, and argues for an art (and artist) free of political responsibilities and constraints: 'So we can have them create their art for our delight, if nothing else. Perhaps through delight man may achieve a higher state of grace' (77). That is certainly better than Towfiq al Khalaf's 'desert ways [which] are an anomaly and a curse' (181) and his romantic Arabist return to the desert, which Jameel rejects as an urban myth.

Politics is never far away from art. Jabra presents Jameel as a discerning intellectual. He's able to reject an interlocutor's specific artistic doctrine while sympathizing with his modernizing urban politics. While Jameel rejects Abdul Kader's conception of artistic commitment, for example, he shares his presentist political orientation. In response to Towfiq, the latter confidently states,

> 'All civilisations based on religion,' he said, 'are now doomed. We are the beginners of a new age. We are no Romantics, though,' he continued. 'We are not returning to Nature, to the Desert, to the Tribe, or whatever you want us to return to, Towfiq. We are beginning right here, in the heart of the city, and leaping forward. We love the city. But it is a sick being and we have to cure it. It has been sick for centuries.' (166)

With Adnan, Jameel does the reverse: wary of his populist politics while appreciating his modernist aesthetics. During Jameel's visit to Adnan's flat in Baghdad's poverty-stricken slums, their political worldviews clash. Where

Jameel sees 'faces no longer capable of registering happiness or suffering' and where 'you either accepted life unquestionably or went mad' (123), Adnan sees vitality: 'The thing is wonderful in spite of its inherent evil. You see, it is a sign of vitality. Vitality, at last. Not decay. Not stagnation. Not connivance. But sheer full-blooded vitality. Our people can now flare up … It means we're no longer dead' (126). If this tide increases, Adnan argues, Palestine can be returned in ten years: 'There's much evil in it [people bestirring], I tell you. But there's no other way. Oh how I hate the mob. It's a fearful monster. But that is the way life's energy, life's will, can be arrested. God bless the loathsome monster' (126–127). Jameel is unconvinced. After all, he retorts, 'the mob' failed in Palestine in the 1930s: why should it succeed here? With no proper organization or political support, uprisings are wasted, even futile. As Jameel sees Baghdad's gathering mass stirrings, Jerusalem and the failure of the revolt rush back to consciousness: 'it was the act of a city groping in the dark, stumbling upon sharp edges. It was the nightmare that had to be dreamed before awakening' (131).

Jabra ends his novel in exactly the same tone: 'In the long months that followed, while we waited, while the Adnans and the Husains and the Taowfiqs impaled themselves on rows of political and social swords, the crows and the kites in squawking formations flew over the palm groves of a slowly refurbished land' (232). There's no political salvation. The awakening barely registers; all we see is the old order slowly 'slipping' (230) as it weakens its suffocating hold on power. There is also no personal salvation. If, as Jameel had said 'The only thing that keeps me alive … is the thought of love. Love, not power' (162), then love is also left unfulfilled at the end. In love and in politics, the novel stages conflict yet is inconclusive about its resolution.

What *Hunters in a Narrow Street* ultimately advocates is sacrifice, not resignation or self-destruction. Jabra asks what individuals can do in the face of an obstinate, decaying regime, and when its collective alternatives and organized political challenges are still too weak to intervene decisively. His answer is clear: become emblems of change and symbols of defiance and renewal. As the ending clearly evokes, impaling themselves against the current order's spikes and stakes can resurrect and regenerate life. At one point in the novel Jameel even tells Sulafa, 'I am going to try and save you', and thinks to himself: 'I had to act the saviour, whatever the plight, the unreality' (196). Jameel's compulsion is shared by all of his friends: 'Like many of his [Adnan's] friends, like penniless Husain and skull-faced Abdul Kader, he envisaged himself as a hero, a saviour, a conspirator of the people, who would consciously merge in them, who would turn all their wild noise into a hymn of joy for an age of love and justice' (110). First there is sacrifice,

then there is art. So the kind of sacrifice that gets transmuted by art into a celebration 'love and justice' is a sacrifice for love's sake. This transmutation clearly describes Jabra's two-pronged conception in *Hunters*: collective suffering is redeemed by the sacrificing artist.

In *Hunters*, sacrifice is not only for personal salvation but for collective good. It is done in the name of the destitute 'black-clad peasant women standing near their mud hut', who 'were faceless and anonymous, like animals which nobody claimed' (177) that Jameel condescendingly describes as he leaves his lover's suburban hideaway. The edges of Baghdad were then filled with poor rural migrants (mud hut dwellers or *shurughis*) in search for jobs and freedom, escaping what the Palestinian historian of Iraq called 'a new *commercial* shaikhly semifeudalism', where the rural landlord was an 'absolute master of peasantry by this time depressed to a condition resembling serfhood'. There was, in fact, a massive migration from country to city in that period, which had dramatic social effects on Baghdad.[36] Jabra's response is to both register it and to incorporate it into his own story, rather than to narrate or dwell on it. He neither ignores nor represents the basic contours of this massive social process, but tucks it under the sign of a modernizing city struggling to realize a better future for all through the agency of its self-sacrificing intellectuals. This move is also apparent when Jabra recounts the brutal public murder of a peasant woman by her family in Baghdad that horrifies Jameel (44–45). If Jabra fails to convey peasant rural perspective in *Hunters*, he does construct a striking image of women's oppression that resonates throughout the narrative, and connects to the moral core of the novel: 'The girl was on her back in a pool of blood which was slowly tricking towards my door. Her arms and legs gave violent jerks every now and then. Her black aba had fallen under her twisted head and shoulders, surrounding them like a mount in a frame. Her eyes were open, her mouth gasping for breath' (44). For Jabra, this murder symbolizes not only the persistence of brute male violence against women (whom Jameel wants to save) but also women's own precarious attempts to escape the clutches of a socially conservative countryside. The episode ends with the suggestion that Baghdad still reels under such violent and hypocritical sheikhly honour: '"There's honour for you", whispered Adnan. "Of course the honourable sheikh is going on a visit to a prostitute right now, but no matter"' (45). Such encounters in *Hunters* only boost Jameel's determination to act on behalf of the weak and marginalized, which include Palestine's one million dispossessed and hungry refugees, seeking an end to being 'dead among the dead' (204) and aiming to release both friends and strangers 'from the powers of negation and evil' (118).

Christian overtones abound here. The martyr embodies the collective's suffering and redeems their sin and weakness. Raymond Williams has described this 'rhythm of sacrifice' in the following terms: 'It is not the act of the body of men, convinced of the need of sacrificial blood for the renewal of their common life. On the contrary, this need has to be brought to the people, by the exceptional man.' Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* stages this pattern, as Williams adds: 'It rests on a division of humanity into the many unconscious and the few conscious, in terms similar to the division between unauthentic and authentic man. Yet the pattern is such that it is the role of the conscious not to save themselves but to save the world.' It is easy to read this pattern politically as elitist and conservative: the collective remains passive as it awaits its self-sacrificing redeemer. And Williams seems to object to this form of sacrifice on these exact grounds: it substitutes individual sacrifice for collective self-activity and self-organization. But he also draws attention to its power in symbolizing a condition of collective helplessness and paralysis: 'Tragedy rests not in the individual destiny, of the man who must live this sacrifice, but in the general condition, of a people reducing or destroying itself because it is not conscious of its true condition. The tragedy is not in the death, but in the life.'[37]

As a harbinger of collective self-renewal, this is what mattered for Jabra. Individual redemption was an act of struggle against the social order. Jabra says this explicitly in an interview with Elias Khoury in 1974. *Hunters*, or what he tellingly calls his 'documentary novel', predicted the 1958 revolution in Iraq, he states (I elaborate on 1958 in my discussion of *The Ship*).[38] Jabra doesn't substitute one agent for another, but shows how the one agent symbolically embodies all the others: 'As for the individual sphere, individual salvation, it is the idea of the salvation for the whole nation, that is: the salvation of the individual is the salvation of the collective, and I can't imagine the salvation of the collective without individual salvation, salvation in the Christian sense; that of Christ Salvation, for example.' So rather than substituting for collective redemption, it affirms and becomes its condition of possibility. Following Walter Benjamin's messianic conception of sacrifice, Terry Eagleton sees the revolutionary potentialities of this form of tragedy: 'Sacrifice is the performative act which brings a new social order into being'; and: 'through the death of the hero, the community comes to consciousness of its subjection to mythological forces'.[39] As Eagleton shows, the hero here is the dispossessed, the destitute, and the rejected stone: the *pharmakos*. This is Jameel in *Hunters*. In fact. Sulafa describes him in those exact terms: 'the wrong person … Christian, foreigner, refugee, moneyless – oh, everything' (191). And yet she's completely

in love with him and will do anything to be with him. The beloved alien thus becomes the figure of revolt.

Like Benjamin, Jabra saw sacrifice as an act of liberation, as initiating the process of Arab renewal. A whole generation of 1950s poets and artists shared his cultural-vanguardist conception and his 'revolutionizing of methods'[40]. Salma Khadra Jayyusi would call this 'the great poetic revolution of the fifties':

> The 1948 Palestine debacle was instrumental in admitting radical change. The unanimous reaction of Arab poets all over the Arab world was one of anger, rejection, alienation and horror; an atmosphere of gloom and pessimism reigned, but it soon gave birth to feelings of challenge, to a rejection of old established ties with the inherited culture, and to a renunciation of loyalty to both the remote past, and the immediate past which had brought so much shame and frustration. A new courage was now born which would enable poets to find their own poetic style, free from the iron hold of old poetic traditions and concepts.[41]

Jabra was at the forefront of this modernizing trend in Iraq during a time of overall cultural and political upheaval and challenge. His involvement with Jewad Salim's art group was crucial here, as were his critical writings on and friendships with 1950s Iraqi poets like Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Buland al-Haidari. Sacrifice was one of their main literary tropes, and it stood for the need for renewal, modernization, and revolt. As Iraqi cultural critic Abdul-Salaam Yousif argued: 'In addition to *qalaq* (a sense of uneasiness and anxiety) and railing at the city, the new poetry was characterized by rebellion against authority, traditional ways and the old order, whether it was written by the committed, the romantics, or the existentialists.'[42] Sayyab epitomized this trend for Jabra. In an important essay called 'Notes on Literature and the Palestinian Revolution', he states:

> self-sacrifice for man, to end injustice, end misery, suffering, and hunger. Badr was a *feda'i* by both instinct and ideology. Thoughts of dying in the good he believes in against evil, in light against the dark, is in everything he wrote or said. Thoughts of death, before falling ill were those of sacrifice in the religious and patriotic senses, in the symbolic and actual senses: death leads to life, death is the gate to life and resurrection, in the nation, on earth, and the whole existence.[43]

As Sayyab himself ends his poem 'Death and the River':

> I wish I would have drowned in the very depth of my blood
> That I might have carried the burden with humankind
> And resurrected life. Verily, my death is a triumph.[44]

'Abd al-Wahhab al-Bayyati's series 'Odes to Jaffa' (1956) invokes the same imagery of sacrifice and redemption when it opens with:

> O Jaffa, your Jesus is in bonds.
> Naked, daggers tearing at him, beyond the crosses of borders.

Here Jesus and Prometheus fuse in an image of challenge and self-sacrifice that expresses Palestinian dispossession and delineates the violent Zionist takeover of Jaffa. Al-Bayyati closes his series with 'The Return', where a resurrected (refugee) Jesus returns to Palestine with the poet's 'scattered' and 'hungry' brethren:

> And as if Jesus
> With you were returning to Galilee
> Without a cross.[45]

After the loss of Palestine, the reconstruction of the Arab self and the deep-seated transformation of the Arab world were radical writers' only possible answers to the Palestinian catastrophe. In fact, when Palestinian nationalism re-emerges in the mid 1960s, Jabra feels completely vindicated, as if he's been willing it into being since 1948. As he emphasizes in the same essay, he dreamt up the *fedayeen* (martyrs) years before they came into being.[46]

If art has a function for Jabra, it is neither merely to delight nor to didactically teach. Art is here to sing 'a hymn of joy for an age of love and justice' (110). It substitutes for religion, secularizing Christianity. Jesus becomes the exiled artist, and the kingdom of heaven is a free, just, and self-determining Arab nation. To facilitate this, Jabra writes a novel that captures an Arab society on the cusp of change and transformation. By anticipating an age of 'love and justice', Jabra prophesizes its realization. What has been prophesied shall happen: the word will become the act: 'And the word became flesh' (John 1:14).

The Ship **(1970)**

If *Hunters* ultimately invokes Benjamin's sense of the artist as sacrificial liberator, where collective tragedy is paramount rather than the problems of the sacrificing self, *The Ship* can veer from this position. Rather than depicting the artist-intellectual acting as redeemer of society's suffering, individualist concerns and preoccupations can take over, displacing and substituting for collective tragedy. Williams' implicit anxiety about 'the exceptional' becoming the subject of tragedy rather than its symbol is well founded here. Jabra has a tendency to skirt far too close to collective erasure, and to become far too preoccupied with the problems and concerns

of a very small social stratum. Despite its powerful hold on Jabra's fictional world, he never fails to connect its problems with those of society at large: interpersonal predicaments are read as symptomatic of wider collective questions and concerns. For Jabra, the personal and the social are not only intertwined but mirror each other: freedom in one sphere implies, and is at times conditional on, freedom in the other.

Published in 1970, *The Ship* in part marks Jabra's response to the Arab-wide defeat of 1967. The general literary response was anticipated by Naguib Mahfouz, whose work in the 1960s constitutes, as Rasheed El-Enany argues, a series of political critiques of an Arab (Nasserite) revolution which had betrayed its vocal commitment to what Mahfouz describes as 'true socialism and true democracy'. From *The Thief and the Dogs* (1961) to *Miramar* (1967), Mahfouz charts his 'disillusionment with the 1952 revolution during its heyday and even before its crowning failure in 1967'.[47] In this regard, 1967 comes to tell Mahfouz what he already knew: that Arab petit-bourgeois nationalism and revolution failed because its leaders betrayed social justice and democracy. Mahfouz's fiction, in this period, it is worth adding, stands as an internal critique of the political contradictions and failures of the Arab modernizing project. His *Adrift on the Nile* (1966), which is set on a boathouse on the Nile and on which *The Ship* is loosely modelled, explodes the apathetic self-indulgence of the Egyptian bourgeois class where 'everyone is writing about socialism, while most dream about wealth' by forcing a reckoning with the social injuries that they inflict on society (symbolized by a road accident for which they are responsible that kills a peasant). As El-Enany explains: 'The accident has shattered all their illusions and forced them out of their escapist stupor into the harshness of reality.' But their failure to bare responsibility for their act signifies their degeneration as a class: 'In retrospect it is not difficult to understand the extent of the author's melancholy inasmuch as it is difficult not to see the '*awwama* [boathouse] as symbolic of a society on the verge of sinking, and the car accident in terms of an oracular vision pointing at the other catastrophic accident then awaiting the nation round the corner of history – the 1967 defeat in the war with Israel.'[48] Several of Mahfouz's post-1967 novels are, in fact, radical critiques of the Nasser era, regarded as political interventions in the name of universal principles of democracy and individual freedom. One last example from Mahfouz's politically most damning novel, *Karnak Café* (1974), will suffice:

> I wondered at the condition of my country. In spite of its deviations, it is turning into a mighty giant. It has strength and influence. It manufactures everything from sewing needles to rockets, and sponsors the great causes of

> humanity. Why is it then that the human being in my country has become so small and trivial like a mosquito? Why is he without rights, dignity or protection?[49]

The failure of individual freedom articulated by Mahfouz only intensifies in the years to come, and comes to epitomize the 1967 defeat in literature. As Faisal Darraj concludes: 'If the renaissance had provided the groundwork for the birth of the Arabic novel, the defeat of June 1967 destroyed this same enlightenment and its basic foundation, paving the way for a new era which was hostile to enlightenment.'[50]

If Jabra in *The Ship* grapples with the same reality that Mahfouz anticipates and charts, 1967 is a much more contradictory moment for the Palestinians than for other Arabs. And this distinction is much sharper in invocations of Palestinian revolution in *Walid Masoud*, though it does have a decisive function in *The Ship* as well. Indeed, it takes the defeat of the Palestinian revolution (or its severe weakening) for Jabra to lose hope in collective struggle and begin to be as pessimistic as Mahfouz was after 1967. The Palestinian temporality here is politically out of sync with the rest of the Arab world. The Palestinians rise to prominence after the 1967 defeat act as a lightning rod for Arab-wide hope. As a result, thousands of Arabs join the energized Palestinian guerrilla movements in Jordan and Lebanon, and see the Palestinian revolution as the best mechanism for reversing the region's defeat and the Palestinians as catalysts for Arab-wide change. As *The Ship* and *Walid Masoud* show, this political unevenness expresses the subjective contradictions of 1967: of Palestinians galvanizing the energies for revolution in an Arab world stunned by defeat.

In *The Ship*, a group of friends sail westward across the Mediterranean. If this conceit suggests a lack of social anchorage and engagement, Arab society is far from absent in the novel. Indeed, the travellers see themselves as escapees from the binding constraints, failures, and worsening oppressions of contemporary Arab regimes. The abandoned social order not only determines the protagonists' main act of flight but also constitutes the novel's actual condition of possibility. *The Ship* is dependent on what it negates and escapes. This is true not only in the sense that collective concerns (social, historical, and political) constantly crop up as private memories or subjects of debate and discussion, but also in the more profound sense that *The Ship*'s core concern is the interconnection between personal and political, between unfulfilled love and failed politics, between interpersonal relationships and public events. Failure manifests itself in loss of love as well as loss

of possibilities for political change. The novel's multiple subjective narrative structure here signifies lack of unity, common will, and political organization.[51] And breakdown signals both actual mental collapse and suicide as well as social and political disintegration. If these 1960s Mahfouzian themes predominate, the lasting power of *The Ship* lies in ultimately resisting them and believing that they are reversible in the present. The characters' unanchored existential loss is reversed by their return to struggle at the end.

The Ship's main theme is the tragedy of unfulfilled love. Isam Salman evokes a portrait of personal suffering in his first-person account:

> But the greatest ordeal of all is to fall in love with a woman, one which is almost in your arms, and yet one whom you cannot have. You may possess [tanal] a thousand women, but that one remains a thorn in your throat. The agony haunts you; it takes you by surprise each time her voluptuous face invades your dreams or shakes the inane numbness of your life. Death is one agony, and this is another. (14, 8–9)[52]

Nothing can be as unbearable as the unattainability of real love. Isam expresses a purely subjective set of feelings. And had Jabra stopped here, or suggested that Isam and Luma's unachieved union was the result of personal failures or lack of reciprocity, *The Ship* would have been a domestic, interpersonal tragedy. But the force of the novel lies in Jabra pushing out of the personal sphere in order to show how domestic and public realms are interconnected. Love gets stifled not only by traditionalist familial constraints but also as a result of political strife. Isam and Luma can't be together, first, because Isam's father killed Luma's uncle in an old family feud over land. Memories of this event rupture their relationship during their student days in England. And, second, because they ended up on different sides of the 1958 revolution. The emerging class and political divide between nationalist rebels and big-landowning (British protected) conservatives and monarchists strains their relationship even further. At the heart of this love story, then, is political conflict.

Isam cannot ignore Luma's powerful associations with the *ancien régime*, while she is unable to forgive him for sacrificing her for his radical politics. Left to deal with her father's imprisonment and her family's persecution, Luma feels abandoned, later telling Isam, 'You probably think I victimised you … I was the victim, the real martyr, but you didn't know it' (141; 164). Swept up by the energy and dynamism of the revolt for 'justice and freedom', Isam doesn't then see that 1958 was 'contradictory' and politically 'confused' (146; 171), or that the innocent and idealist vision it generated was doomed to fail: 'Despite their difference', Isam hoped,

> right and left would meet and people would get together and live in an earthly paradise. Luma and I would become a symbol of love that all humanity would share. All past crimes would be forgiven … Under love's spell, how easy it is to commit the foulest crimes or embrace the highest ideals! Yet idealism is made of air, and reality is more powerful than one thinks. (147; 171)

The year 1958 is a key moment in Iraq's history. It combines an army coup by Abdul Karim Qassem against the Nuri Said government and the British supported monarchy with an anti-imperial mass revolt for freedom and justice. Those who only view 1958 as an Egyptian Free Officers' style coup (like 1952) miss out on its collective character and underlying social dynamic. Hanna Batatu calls it a 'genuine revolution' not only because of a historically decisive mass mobilization which sealed the fortunes of the old regime on the day, but also because 1958 was a culmination of decades of insurrectionary struggle by the popular classes: 'A superficial political phenomenon could not have released passions so vehement or aroused fears or hopes so serious as came to pervade the years 1958–59.' Its effect was both social and political:

> Not only was the monarchy demolished or the whole Western position in the Arab East weakened in a radical manner, but the fortunes of whole classes were also deeply affected. The social power of the greater landed shaikhs and the big town mallaks [landowners] was to a considerable extent destroyed, and the position of the urban workers and the middle and lower-middle strata of society qualitatively enhanced.[53]

The vacillating and erratic nature of its middle-class leadership, and its failure to meet mass demands for democratic freedoms and popular development (signified by the Baath coup of 1963 and by the routing of the hugely popular Communist Party), ultimately meant that Iraq wasn't to be free. But its appeal lasted much longer, and radicalized a generation of intellectuals. Its historical significance was enshrined in 1961 by Jewad Salim's *Naṣbu al-Ḥurriyya* (*Freedom Monument*), which captures in a sequence of massive bronze castings both its modern plebeian revolutionary nature and Iraq's multi-civilizational Assyrian and Babylonian pasts.[54] The monument, as Jabra emphasized in his commemorative study *Jewad Salim and the Freedom Monument* (1974), stands as testimony to Iraq's humanist aspirations and to Salim's unrelenting commitment to human freedom. For Salim, true art aspires to please neither power nor ruler, but to express human nobility, goodness, love, and beauty. The monument thus embodies the whole historical movement towards human justice and brotherhood. Through the sheer power of mass revolt, Salim unleashes

a sequence of events and combinations which bring together peasant, solider, worker, political prisoner, intellectual pioneer, Arab, and Kurd, and blasts an opening towards the future: depicted as a Greek goddess of liberty, slightly elevated, floating, and intoxicated with joy. Such political desire, as Jabra affirms, gripped the imaginary of what he calls a whole generation's 'outbreak towards the future'.[55]

Jabra invokes the 1958 revolution in *The Ship* for a specific reason: to show how it promised more than it delivered, and how its failure had a lasting effect on the present. Life seems hopeless now because 1958 didn't succeed in liberating the individual from the hold of a suffocating past. Freedom and justice never materialized fully and were ultimately subverted. The 'intoxication' it bred ended in disappointment. Jabra accesses this failure through Isam and Luma's relationship. If love was sacrificed in 1958, then no real change could result from this revolt. The formula is characteristically Jabra: no freedom can really be had so long as the individual is not free. He reinforces this position in a harsh portrayal of post-revolutionary Baghdad – dubbed the 'age of worms' in the novel (100; 112) – and depicted as a place ruled by lies, opportunism, and hypocrisy. Falah, Luma's husband, argues,

> One person will say he believes in freedom. He's lying; he's getting a prison cell ready for you. Another will say he believes in the people; he's lying too – just take a look at his bank account after a while, look at the house he's had built, at the bottles of perfume stacked up on the dressing table of his wife or mistress. Every time circumstances change, a new group of liars appears. (110; 126)

Rather than freeing people, Jabra feels, 1958 may have produced new forms of oppression and domination, repeating the past rather than overcoming it.

The Ship's critique of 1958 is productive. It offers a means for individual and collective to come together in harmonious freedom. Both despair and Falah's suicide are overcome. What is left at the end is knowledge and possibility: a recognition of the depth and scope of society's contemporary crisis and of the mistakes of the past, and a gesture towards renewal of agency. Facts are faced head on, as characters are taken to the pit of despair and brought back again with a slim ray of hope and belief in transformation. For Jabra, freedom is a value that must be shaped in the present in order to yield results in the future. Uncompromising challenge is fundamental here, as is the renewal of the capacity for struggle and change. As the Palestinian Wadi Assaf says at the end: 'I was so furious, I felt the blood rushing to my head. "Haven't you [Isam and Luma]

had enough of your tribal nonsense?" I snarled, grabbing him by both arms and shaking him hard. "When are you going to be willing to face the storm in order to get what you want?"' (199; 238). Falah's suicide provides the estranged lovers another opportunity to build a life together on a new foundation that shuns traditions and social conservatism as well as idealism and self-destruction.

Wadi Assaf's final intervention presents a plea for realist re-engagement, both political and epistemological. As he decides to return to Jerusalem with his own re-found lover, he urges Isam to do the same with Luma. He tells them both, 'Your freedom requires that you refuse to run away, face up to things, accept whatever pains you; that you know that pain, that anger, and the whole slow, agonizing progress. Your freedom involves your being an architect in your own country, however much it aggravates you and contrives to hurt you' (198; 237). Jabra will develop this notion of the Palestinian as the main catalyst for change to the full in *Walid Masoud*. What is striking here is the fact that it is Wadi, who earlier had invoked Dante's 'All hope abandon, ye who enter here!', who makes this speech. This entails a return to the Arab real, and jars against Faisal Darraj's reading of Wadi as an 'unrealistic Palestinian', that is, too much of a literary invention.[56] *The Ship*'s social distance is indeed the novel's main conceit, but its artistic invention and cultural memory lead back to the real which caused the rift in the first place: the politics of 1958 (invoked in the moment of the 1967 defeat). By journeying, discussing, and renewing love, escape is reversed, despair halted, and hope renewed. But the ending contains no false promises. There is only the will and determination to challenge an oppressive present and work towards a free and just future. The transformability of the present is still possible, and self-sacrificing love remains a meaningful and coherent trope for Jabra.

In Search of Walid Masoud (1978)

Jabra reported that Arnold Toynbee once told him:

> You Palestinians came out of Palestine the way Greek scholars came out of Constantinople after it was occupied by the Turks in 1453. You now play the same great cultural role in the Arab nation. That is either your destiny or your death, I don't know.[57]

No novel epitomizes this statement more than Jabra's *Walid Masoud*. As the Arab national struggle waned after 1967, crushed by Israel's militarism and colonial drive, the Palestinians rose as sole bearers of Arab hopes

for change and dignity. With the consolidation of Palestinian revolutionism and nationalism from the mid 1960s onwards came an increasing cultural emphasis on the uniqueness and efficacy of Palestinians. The Palestinian resistance fighters stood against the shock of 1967 as agents and symbols of the continuing struggle for freedom and liberation. Jabra's work registers this shift. *Hunters* shows how participation in the Arab-wide struggle for transformation was his answer to the *nakba*. Changing Iraq was seen as strengthening the Arab world and modernizing it in order to tackle the challenges of foreign intervention and local oppression. *The Ship* reinvigorates Arab struggle after the failure of 1958 and the debacle of 1967 by reimagining the possibilities of revolt. *Walid Masoud* puts far more emphasis on the Palestinian front, as if the older generational perspective of *Hunters* and *The Ship* is Palestinianized, baptized in the fire of revolt after 1967. Jabra moves from an Arab evaluation of Arab problems to a uniquely Palestinian 'structure of feeling': anxious and restless, focused on Palestine as site of struggle and confrontation and on the Palestinian as main agent of transformation, and far less hopeful of Arab capabilities and possibilities. This position captures the contradictory nature of the 1967 moment: both defeat and radicalization and rollback of Arab nationalism and revolutionary opportunity. Under such conditions, for Jabra the revolutionary hero becomes the Palestinian intellectual.

If in *Hunters* the self-sacrificing Arab intellectual symbolizes the emerging Arab-wide struggle against the *ancien régimes*, in *Walid Masoud* the modern Palestinian intellectual becomes the main catalyst for change. The novel explores the mysterious central figure of Walid Masoud, who had disappeared. Is he the last Arab hope or is the novel ultimately about the search for an absent but sorely missed Arab self? Whatever the definite answer, in *Walid Masoud* Jabra has, as Munif put it, 'at last thrust [his] hand into the fire of revolution'.[58] Revolution was not absent from Jabra's mind before, but it was never treated with such aesthetic clarity and political urgency. And yet older questions remain. Can Jabra's new Palestinian messiah carry the burden of his Arab responsibility? And is his symbolic-messianic exceptionality another form of weakness and incapacity, precluding mass self-liberation?

Similar to the structure of *The Ship*, *Walid Masoud* is composed of first-person accounts, with no unifying or omniscient narrator to provide objective grounding, but with emphasis on absence and loss of meaning as key tropes. Here the Palestinian is the absent component, rather than a present ingredient in community as in *The Ship*. Such distancing

foregrounds uncertainty and raises the prospect of unknowability and relativization of perspective, even as the novel sustains a realist historicity and a Lukácsian typicality. Although self-sacrificing Walid unifies and motivates the defeated with his rebellious energy, he remains a social and cultural type: in him class and individual features intersect and combine. Now he is not only absent but alone in his typicality: an exceptional Arab, the Palestinian, who refuses to conform to a defeated world. His friends tell of their social entanglements and discuss with each other, repeatedly returning to the main reason for their narratives: an absence that refuses to be forgotten. Questions endlessly resonate: who was Walid Masoud, why did he disappear so suddenly, and where could he have gone? For some of this friends, he was mainly a lover and inspirer, for others an intellectual interlocutor and political activist. Some envy him and want to emulate his sexual escapades, others treat him like a text to be appreciated, deciphered, and understood. Each perspective on him is valuable, each informs the reader of a different aspect of Walid's personality and history. But his friends are as anxious to find out the reason behind his disappearance as they are to correctly evaluate their friend's life. None are cynical or uninterested, none are unaffected. Their search for truth and knowledge is fundamental both to the novel's structure and its theme: Walid's absence must be understood. If Jabra is susceptible to the charge of over-intellectualizing, then intellectualism is only one of a range of positions presented in the novel, which remains centrally preoccupied with Walid's own personal acts and political praxis. Reconceiving political possibility remains fundamental.

Dr Jawad Husni, Walid's biographer and the main investigator of his disappearance, epitomizes the group's search for anchorage and meaning. His investigative work is focused on trying to capture the essence of Walid's philosophy of life as a way to determine his current whereabouts. He portrays him as a man who stands apart from surrounding society, an outsider who refuses to succumb to contemporary society's inanity and fear: 'Terror became part of our lives, and we learned to live with it and get around it as best as we could, so that conspiracy was build into the ordinary way we thought. We think like terrified people, like those trying to avoid the evil in others' (4; 14). As Jawad Husni describes him, Walid becomes increasingly impatient with this terror-stricken Arab condition. *The Ship*'s 'world of the worm' seems to have only deepened and expanded in *Walid Masoud*. Creativity has been crushed, the spirit of confrontation and revolt liquidated. Walid says as much in a newspaper interview he gives some months before his disappearance in which he indicates that

there can only be one way out of this generalized failure of will: redemptive self-sacrifice. Jawad quotes Walid:

> The only courage that deserves to be translated into action is challenging death with raised fists and violence, thereby using death itself to trample down death, as in the death of a freedom fighter, for example. But as for all of you, let me tell you: You're all cowards. Beat your cans and drums at the whale if you like, and hope it coughs up the moon from its throat. (4; 15)

Words are useless in a world grown so apathetic and wrong. Only the self-sacrificing act remains. But unlike *Hunters*, little indication is given in this novel that the world will change as a result. Yet self-sacrificing death remains a meaning-generating activity. The conscience will be awakened and cynical self-interest will be overcome. Jabra foregrounds the significance and urgency of the Palestinian act. Surrounded by a dead Arab society, Walid searches for what he calls 'the eye of the storm': disappearance is posited as a form of re-engagement, absence as revolt.

But why has the world turned so sour and void, and Walid so secretive and silent? What causes Walid's disappearance, the novel suggests, is his recognition that the early 1950s promise of reconstituting the Arab world on new foundations has failed. Arab modernization was ruthless and elitist, terrorizing rather than liberating Arab society. In his discussions with friends and in his book *Man and Civilization*, Walid warned against 'revolutions imposed on those societies from above … by ruthless minorities who aren't to be swayed from the goals they've set, and regard all obstacles to progress as solvable by technical and rational means' (27; 44). Against such external impositions, he argues for free and self-willed change: 'He was convinced that solutions must, in the final analysis, come from within, from the collective wills that make up the overall identity of the people' (28–29; 45). Creativity and self-expression are important values for Walid, affirming his 'faith in mankind' (29; 45) and in human imagination. As his friend Ibrahim al-Hajj Nawfal also reports, Walid wanted an Arab revolution:

> a fresh vision of everything, from economics to poetry, one based on genuine knowledge … to achieve a man closer to the ideal, a free man, a man who can be convinced, who can disagree, who can reject. Such a man is the one who will, finally, renew the nation, give it a second birth, so that it can share in the progress of mankind. (236–237; 314)

Walid's tragedy, Nawfal adds, is that his vision could never fly. Indeed, he imagines Walid 'as a bird with huge wings, flying around in a big hall

and eventually bumping against the ceiling, unable to break through to the sky beyond' (237; 315). Nawfal sees Walid as somebody who refuses all objective groundings. Free and unbound, he remains ultimately ineffective with very limited political appeal:

> He wanted to be a saint in a world of sin and corruption, an independent theorist in a world of political parties, an undogmatic dogmatist in a world of rigid primness … He was amazed that (when all was said and done) only a few people really understood him, and those few were the ones who loved his ideas because they loved him personally, a love based on something that sprang from his eyes, his hands, his voice. (237; 315)

The Christian connotations of Jabra's description are hard to ignore. Like Jesus, few people understood Walid – only those who had contact with him or really knew him, his disciples. And like Jesus, love is central to Walid's worldview. As he tells his friend Kazim, who attacks *Man and Civilization*: 'You've never uttered a word or written a syllable based on love of anything or a sense of fairness towards anyone … Do you think anything great can ever emerge if it isn't based on love?' (44; 63). Walid refuses to conform to a politically unfree and sinful world, but seeks to change it through love. Like Jesus, his action is symbolic not political-organizational; he is not someone who builds a party but someone who sacrifices himself. Revolution will not be realized by organization but by resurrection and transfiguration.[59] This may explain Walid's hostility to communism and to all forms of organized politics. If Benjamin marries messianism to communism, messianism reigns supreme in Jabra.[60]

In other words, Walid is a modern-day Palestinian messiah. His childhood in Bethlehem is steeped in Christian imagery and preoccupations, including an escape to the wilderness with a group of fellow hermits seeking communion with God. As he says in his autobiographical section in the novel: 'I wanted to convert the world to love … It was because of them [the poor] that I wanted to change something that lay deep in the very core of life itself' (130; 177). But not 'with theories and revolutionary planning' (130; 177). 'Absolute love and freedom' (131; 178) can only be achieved by separating oneself from the world, floating above it like a bird (as Nawfal reiterates), and ridding oneself of every relationship. Only by suffering in isolation can Walid express his love for the world: 'Christ spent many years in the wilderness, and then came back to talk to man about love; and when he came back, they crucified him. The rebel, then, has to be crucified as well, and his victory will be in his crucifixion' (131; 178). By dying for others, Jesus declares his love for the world. Crucifixion becomes a symbolic act of world-transforming potential, ushering in the kingdom

of heaven when justice and freedom will reign, and poverty and want will be a thing of the past. Walid, too, seeks to die for the destitute and dispossessed, and end their suffering through his disappearing act.

But if Jesus died on the cross, Walid has to die fighting the Zionist occupiers of his land. In twentieth-century Palestine, Jabra posits, Jesus would be a *fidā'i*: a martyr in the struggle for Palestine. Symbolic acts and real acts have to be conjoined for Jabra, and so he keeps returning to the example of Palestinian poet Abdrahim Mahmoud, who died in al-Shajara fighting Zionist forces and reciting his poetry at the same time. For Jabra, as he argues in his essay 'The Poet-Knight: Abdrahim Mahmoud', Mahmoud is what poets should be: resisters with words and deeds.[61] As his most famous poem 'The Martyr' exemplifies:

> I shall carry my soul on the palm of my hand,
> Tossing it into the cavern of death!
> Either a life to gladden the hearts of friends
> Or a death to torture the hearts of foes!
> An honourable man's spirit has two aims:
> to die fighting, or to achieve victory.[62]

Unlike the Gospels, though, Walid can't love his enemies. Nor can he follow Paul's God who says 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'.[63] He disappears to the Occupied Territories, one character contends, to wreak vengeance on his occupiers for killing both his *fidā'i* son Marwan and his brother twenty years earlier. This explains Chapter 10 in the novel ('Marwan Walid attacks Umm al-Ayn with his Colleagues') where Marwan takes over the narrative and recounts his commando experiences. Its unique commando register is there to emphasize the need to listen to *fidā'i* voice and narrative. Such self-sacrifice epitomizes Walid's own *agape*, done in order to protect friends and defend the Bethlehem poor. As he says in 1948: 'So let me die then, if my death will allow you to live on, my city. Saint Augustine of Carthage, what would you have to say if you knew about it? Here's my defenceless people; they're killing them, uprooting them, pulverising them, and scattering their limbs across the valleys and mountains of the earth' (181; 242). Faced with such destruction, Walid resolves to taunt and fight his enemies, not pray for them, or transform through love. That is his primary injunction. But why aren't his enemies delineated, given specific texture, or directly represented (as with the other Palestinian novelists)? Why is the enemy in Jabra textually absent, yet fought against at the same time? This paradox is not the result of any Arab nationalist denial of Israel: even that argument is hard to sustain given

Zurayk's deep preoccupation with the new reality in *The Meaning of the Disaster* and given (another example) the Arab Nationalist Movement's evolution from a politics of revenge to a politics of confrontation after 1967, premised on studying and understanding the nature of the Zionist project (represented by the group Kanafan belonged to). Jabra's constant silence resembles Habiby's (about whom more later) and has the same underlying cause: the *nakba*. As Jabra's narrator says in *Hunters* when he recounts Jerusalem's occupation in 1948: 'What was I to do to the *faceless anonymous enemy*? In our impotence, unarmed and defenceless, we vowed revenge' (10, italics added). To remember your enemy is to remember your deep injury. To dwell there is overwhelming, if not debilitating. So the *nakba* haunts and disturbs – like Leila's severed hand in *Hunters*. And the present becomes about struggling against the destruction of love; lost, but to be redeemed in a just future again.

Love and friendships are supremely important for Walid. Jabra always entangled love with friendship and the interpersonal in an Augustinian manner. Nawfal alludes to this when he says that 'only a few people really understood him, and those few were the ones who loved his ideas because they loved him personally'. Walid had to be seen and loved to be believed. With men, this communication takes the form of discussions and intellectual exchanges. With women, it is sexual love, a passion powerful enough to change his lovers and free them from their burdens and repressed selves. This happens to Maryam al-Suffar in the novel. As impacted by Walid's love as he is by hers, she once tells him, 'Walid! You're horrible, you're wicked, wicked. You've destroyed me. You've ruined me. I want you. I desire you. I'll kill you, tear you apart, into small pieces and eat every bit of you' (168; 225). And he tells her: 'You'll be the death of me, I'm sure,' (171; 228). She tries to hang on to him as to a rock, while he continues to search for the 'eye of the storm'. Mutuality is constantly posited and undermined by the much more powerful logic of Walid's exceptionality. If they are equal in love, they are ultimately unequal in social role and position. Walid changes Maryam's life – her oppression is attenuated – but she never gains the powerful agency he has in the novel. Walid's project determines all else. His focus on Palestine is Jabra's as well. So Maryam ends up with him on a trip to pre-67 West Bank, where he points to Dahisha, the refugee camp on the outskirts of Bethlehem, and says: 'Here are the cells of the revolution' (175; 233). And she ends up christened, indelibly, blessed by Palestine's paradisial qualities: 'Time and again, in the dark cave of the Church of the Nativity, which was lit with old oil lanterns, I felt, unexpectedly, that I was part of

its holiness, that my love was as holy as it was, that I should persevere in that love, no matter what' (175; 233).

Holy love is also what Wisal Raouf feels. She describes Walid as miraculous and her relationship with him is even more intense and transformative than Maryam's:

> Little did I realize then that later he'd give me wounds that wouldn't heal, like the five wounds of his Jesus …
>
> When compared with my other experiences, the time I spent with him shook the very ground beneath my feet … I was totally merged, transforming, meshing, and emerging completely different from before … I got to know Walid from the inside … Time and again, the illusion came to me that Walid was actually me. I began knowing and loving him as I did my own self … The fact that I was he or vice versa should not be taken to mean there was some tacit agreement between us. There were conflicts; nothing was expressed simply in terms of black and white. I found myself becoming his facsimile; love made me like him, tolerating all the contradictions and refusing to settle merely for an ultimate abstract idea. (199–200; 265–266)

Wisal is permanently scarred and changed forever by Walid's love. She learns a new language and makes sense of the world differently, seeing new forms and new possibilities. She does not lose herself completely in Walid, but she is irreversibly changed by his becoming so much a part of her that he is indistinguishable from her own self. Whether he 'was actually me' or she a facsimile of him remains unsettled. It is clear, though, that Wisal has been, as she says, 'uprooted, and entwined around your trunk and branches' (205; 273). He even renames her as Shahd. But their impact on one another is clearly unequal, and Jabra emphasizes that their union ends the surrounding sense of death and stagnation: this explosion of life and desire reconfirms the life-giving power of love. Walid is also reborn as a result and admits as much in a letter to her: 'Shahd, you were the one who put an end to my indifference, my personal limitations, my stupor. Maybe you shouldn't have done it. Now that I don't have it, the pain I feel stuns me, tears me apart; it's been doing it for days now' (208; 276).

Jabra's circle in *Walid Masoud* is complete. Walid sacrifices himself both *because* of love and *for* love. Love allows him to believe in the renewal and salvation of society, and he undertakes his sacrifice in order to help usher in love-all-round. Personal and collective are meaningfully connected here once more. Through self-sacrifice, Walid raises the possibility of collective redemption. The lover becomes a *fidā'i*. This is Jabra answer to the decay of the Arab revolution. When all forces for change seem defeated, Palestinians gain messianic qualities. As Wisal tells Jawad Husni before

rushing off to join Walid in the Palestinian resistance movement, resurrection is inevitable: 'He'll come back. One day, a while back, I had a feeling he'd been killed … But now I've come to the conclusion that he's conquered death' (286; 375).

Wisal is deeply aware that her act is an isolated one and that Walid's impact is too weak to change his surroundings: 'Yet, the world stayed the way it was with all its flaws; nothing changed. You came as a stranger and left the same way. You turned me into a stranger in the midst of my own family and friends. Only I have changed' (211; 278). Self-sacrifice seems an affirmation of life and struggle for Walid, yet it leaves Arab society of the 1970s unchanged. Although his disappearance causes anxiety and raises many questions, and his life has transformational potential for some of his close friends and lovers, the ending suggests that his act is a product of a time when Palestinians were left to fight for their rights on their own; a time when Arab states like Jordan colluded against and liquidated the Palestinian resistance in Black September (alluded to in the novel); a time when Arab forces of renewal have begun to lose steam and 'news of misery and hatred except for one poem' fill the papers (113; 151). If the whole Arab world stood by as thousands of resistance fighters were killed or injured by a Western-supported Jordanian regime, then what hope can there be for the Arab world? *Walid Masoud* captures this mood, as Jabra tries to subvert it with its own conception of a Palestinian messiah. Not yet defeat, but a beleaguered revolution. Popular resurrection and redemption are still possible. But when self-sacrifice ceases to be a meaningful strategy for Jabra and is replaced by inwardness and disconnect, we know that a realist aesthetics of emancipation has collapsed.

At the end of the novel, Jawad Husni sits at his desk and attempts to make sense of Walid's life, trying and failing to smooth over its contradictions and complexities.

> Walid was the product of his life, and the lives of those around him, the product of his own particular time and of our time in general, all this at once. And what time were they both, his time and ours?
>
> So it's back to the forest and back to the sea. (289; 379)

If Walid's life is a text (like the one poem that 'sneaked' into Maryam's paper above) to be mulled over, read, and re-read, then that text is as messy and contradictory as his life and times. The last question is only answered by the resolute acts of the last sentence. Yet, the ending is neither purely textualist nor hopeless. After the wilderness, there is the challenge; after the sea, there is the return. Words incarnate deeds.

What Jabra never questions, however, is whether self-sacrifice is an adequate response to the Arab crisis. Is its repetition symptomatic of failure rather than resolution? If self-sacrifice was recommended in *Hunters* nearly twenty years before *Walid Masoud*, and failed, then the efficacy of this trope seems open to question. For Jabra, the answer seems negative, and this suggests a persistent ideological propensity on his part to formulate an individualist trope in response to a collective crisis. If everyone acted like Walid, he suggests, the crisis would be overcome. So, for Jabra, collective change is a mere extension of individual action. Society will be changed when everyone emulates the freedoms and values of a small group of people and, most importantly, recognizes the supreme value of self-sacrifice. As Ibrahim tells Jawad, '"Are you aware … that twenty-five years ago he [Walid] was advocating the formation of secret groups like the fedayeen today, but no one was prepared to listen to him?"' (61; 83). And he adds,

> Walid reeled like a madman between the general and the particular, between commitment to self and commitment to others, and saw that any effort on behalf of others achieves fruition by virtue of an internal initiation [or strive] aimed at everything that's profound, ebullient, convulsive, and crying out for freedom. (62; 84)

'Initiation' in Arabic (*sa'i*) carries the sense of pursuit and search. So collective good can be achieved through (an internal) search within the self. By tapping into one's own resources of energy and life, of freedom and rebellion, and by liberating oneself, one serves the collective. Deep personal salvation begets all-round change and freedom. But this process can only be sustained as an image. Its historical and political form is weak and limited, as Jabra acknowledges. Its real power lies in its symbolic qualities of messianic redemption and renewal: in death defying death – especially since at this stage freedom is still deemed possible.

Walid Masoud takes the story of literature and revolution to the verge of the tragic. Jabra develops his self-sacrificing trope from an earlier generational typicality of Arab intellectual and artist to what is now seen as a single modern Palestinian messiah carrying the weight of a whole society on his shoulders and dying for the sake of its renewal. Tragic in his exceptional singularity, he represents both the earlier forces of change and revolt and the fear of their complete evisceration. If the Arab world once served as the setting for the rebellious act, now struggle has been displaced and shrunk: Arab-wide revolution turns into a struggle against the Israeli occupation. The eye of the storm is

also its dissipation. The Palestinians emerge politically as the conditions for rectifying their historical calamity become more difficult and more complicated. The authoritarian re-mobilization of the 1973 war suffocates the re-emerging revolution after 1967, winning the Arab political day at the end.

As contradictory and paradoxical as Palestinian emergence after 1967, *Walid Masoud* captures both the moment of emancipation and the moment of defeat, both a realist conception of historical change and a modernist crisis of representation, both revolt and recoil. Hope in the novel lies in a pregnant disappearance. Despair is the threat of meaningless death. The novel's power lies in alternating between both and entangling Arab and Palestinian destinies even as they were drifting apart politically. Searching remains meaningful and coherent even as absence registers the coming finality of defeat.

CHAPTER 2

Ghassan Kanafani's revolutionary ethics

Kanafani is the one Palestinian writer who had the makings of a Fanon. Until his life was tragically cut short at the age of thirty-six by an Israeli car bomb in Beirut in 1972 (killing his niece as well), Kanafani combined Fanon's theoretical and political commitments with a conception of culture as combative and revolutionary, aiming to create a national struggle that is universal, internationalist, and humanist. Fanon's conception of culture as articulated in *Wretched of the Earth* applies to Kanafani: 'National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension … It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows. And this two-fold emerging is ultimately the source of all culture.'[1] If the nation here is the basis of politics, it is conceived in universal rather than particularist terms – as the self-determination of an oppressed people justified by democratic values. The nation here is not an oppressive (nationalist) unity but a democratically constituted collective struggling against social and political structures of domination.

Fanon's and Kanafani's point is that culture too is entangled in this broad struggle for humanist articulation. A certain conception of literature is effective here as a result. If for Jabra earlier a (Sartrean) commitment smacked of organizational and political constraints, Kanafani comes to embrace it and theorize it in the Arab context. By responding to Palestinian and Arab history – especially to the rise of the revolutionary conjuncture with which he came to be most associated – Kanafani carved out his own distinct literary aesthetic in the process: realist and emancipatory, plebeian, and participatory. The result has been nicely summed up by Roger Allen:

> No modern Arab novelist has been able to project the tragedy of the Palestinian people in fiction with greater impact than Ghassan Kanafani. This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that he devoted his life to the illustration in both fact and fiction of the circumstances of the Palestinians and to an investigation of the complexities of Arab attitudes to them.[2]

Revolutionary nationalist, socialist humanist, and committed armed insurrectionist, no other Palestinian writer combined Kanafani's organizational politics with such a deep commitment to cultural critique and literary production. Writer, journalist, and spokesperson for the *Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine*, Kanafani wrote novels, short stories, political journalism, historical tracts, plays, satiric weekly pieces (as Faris Faris), and literary criticism. His output ranged from critiquing 'Zionist literature' to defining what he called 'Palestinian resistance poetry', from class analysis of the revolt of 1936–9 to weekly commentary on Palestinian and Arab politics. It is hard to think of a more radical model for a politically committed and engaged Palestinian intellectual. His obituary in the *Daily Star* described him well: a 'commando who never fired a gun': 'his weapon was a ballpoint pen and his arena newspaper pages. And he hurt the enemy more than a column of commandos.'[3]

Until armed resistance arose in the mid 1960s with the emergence of the *fedayeen* groups and Palestinian self-organization, Kanafani's primary commitment was to literature and journalism. He wrote fiction during his time as a school teacher in Damascus and Kuwait, and wrote political journalism for the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) from the mid 1950s onwards (ANM would mutate into the *Popular Front* after 1967: from Arab anti-colonial nationalism to revolutionary nationalism and socialism).[4] It would be hard to overemphasize the significance of literature in Kanafani's life. This needs to be acknowledged at the outset, if only in order to better determine the profound impact that his turn to Palestinian organizational activism had on his own work and thought. It marks a shift from intellectual pessimism to self-generated anticipations and future possibilities. As he once put it in an interview:

> My political position springs from my being a novelist. In so far as I am concerned, politics and the novel are an indivisible case and I categorically state that I became politically committed because I am a novelist, not the opposite. I started writing the story of my Palestinian life before I found a clear political position or joined any organization.[5]

Literature not only preceded politics but led to it. Causation is important here. His literary engagement with Palestinian realities of dispossession pushed him to act politically, acknowledging both the significance and distinctiveness of the artwork. Reality, not literary trends or schools, was the most crucial influence on his fiction and writings. The problems of Palestine would require political solutions through the kind of politics that is deeply informed by the conditions of Palestinian actuality and injury

that he explored and represented in his early short stories. In Lukácsian mode, he saw the truth of what he wanted to change through fiction. And hoped that his fiction would have the same impact on others: hence the urgency and immediacy that marks his work.

If, then, politics was about act and organization, culture was its condition of possibility. Culture was the foundation from which politics would emerge. Though Kanafani shunned didacticism and direct political propaganda in fiction, and was a strong believer in the use of aesthetic criteria for evaluating literary production, he did come to advocate a specific form of political culture from the mid 1960s onwards: humanist, internationalist, and socially engaged. In one of his last interviews, he traces his trajectory from Palestinian actualism to Palestinian universalism in the following terms:

> Initially, I wrote about Palestine as an intrinsically standalone cause, wrote about Palestinian children, the Palestinian human being, about the hopes of Palestinians as such, separately from our world, as independent and self-existent as purely Palestinian facts. Then it became apparent to me that I saw in Palestine a complete human symbol. So when I write about a Palestinian family, I am in reality writing about a human experience. There isn't an event in the world that is not represented in the Palestinian tragedy. And when I depict the suffering of the Palestinians, I am in fact exploring the Palestinian as a symbol of misery in the entire world.[6]

Specificity leads to universalism and humanism. If there's anything unique about Palestinians it is the conditions of misery, poverty, and negation that they share with others. What marks them out is a generalized phenomenon: human wretchedness and oppression. For Kanafani, Palestinians are 'types' of human sufferers – who, by force of circumstances, later become 'types' of revolutionaries. They embody specific conditions and universal features that speak to all human oppression and suffering. Kanafani developed this generalizing tendency in his own literature (especially *Men in the Sun* and after) before it became a conscious political commitment in his post-1967 internationalism. He also explored it in his literary-critical writings under the heading of what he dubbed 'resistance literature'. Before considering Kanafani's own literary work, it is worth discussing this notion in some detail. It not only provides unrivalled access to Kanafani's own literary-critical preoccupations and values, but also signifies the pressures of intensifying Palestinian revolutionary emergence.

In the following, I begin with an assessment of Kanafani's conceptualization of combative fiction. I then show how it works itself through his own writing, and convey how historically sensitive his novels were to shifts

and turning points in Palestinian actuality, moving from despair in *Men in the Sun* (1963) to participatory challenge in *Returning to Haifa* (1969) as a result of 1967. I mark the revolutionary opening and radicalization that the 1967 defeat afforded, and show how Kanafani's radical conception of such an opportunity was shared by other revolutionary thinkers as well (like Sadiq al-Azm). In order to emphasize the universal dimensions of this specific revolutionary conjuncture and its intersection with the global new left, I discuss Jean Genet's *Prisoner of Love* (1986). I do so because it is not only unique as a form of solidarity with a struggling people, but also because of what it conveys about both the Palestinians and the egalitarian spirit of 1968 in Europe. In order to convey the productive possibilities of this moment, I aim to show that the Palestinians didn't only rise during a specific progressive global constellation but that their own conception of struggle allowed for active internationalist connections to be made with them on a human and reciprocal basis. The fact that the Palestinian revolution could become Genet's '*my* revolution', a site of mutual emancipation, is worth posing over at the end.

Palestinian Resistance Literature, 1948–1968

In *Palestinian Resistance Literature 1948–1968*, Kanafani argues that a model for committed literature is to be found in the work of Palestinian writers in Israel. His two long studies, 'Resistance Literature in Occupied Palestine, 1948–1966' and 'Palestinian Resistance Literature: Under Occupation 1948–1968', lifted the lid off the forgotten Palestinian remnant of 1948 (I discuss Habiby and his conception of resistance culture in Chapter 3). Kanafani, in fact, broke Israel's suffocating cultural and political siege that surrounded 48 Palestinians and, as Mahmoud Darwish put it, declared their 'poetic birth' in the Arab world.[7] A host of writers were celebrated and recognized as part of the Palestinian literary canon: Darwish, Samih al-Qasem, Rashed Hussein, and so on. The remnant, it transpires, was not only resisting occupation all along, but was in the vanguard of cultural commitment and 'conscious challenge' to social and political domination. Kanafani argues that 48 Palestinians produced a 'literature that doesn't moan or cry, doesn't surrender or despair' and shuns 'the phenomena of subjective romantic setbacks [*naksāt*] seen in most Arabic poetry these days' (133).[8] After the *naksa* of 1967, only such 'deep and responsible consciousness' is required: it provides a model of commitment and engagement that all Arab letters should emulate. A rational challenge in politics and a realist engagement in literature: this is how Arab defeat would be

radically overturned. Kanafani's own work is testimony to that. Plebeian participatory mobilization is the only answer to defeat and authoritarian restoration.

In the heated debate over commitment (*iltizām*) in the Arab world, Kanafani is squarely in the left revolutionary camp. Part of the general radicalization of the post-*nakba* generation that protested against Western colonialism and internal forms of Arabs domination, *iltizām* conveyed the search for a new politics and culture based on social justice and freedom.[9] Its two main intellectual clusters, as Verena Klemm states, were: 'The socialist-realist model of commitment on the one hand, as well as the pan-Arab model, founded on Sartre's view, on the other hand, are the two prominent and competing conceptions of commitment in the post-colonial Mashriq.'[10] Though these labels can be confusing and too ideological, they can signify distinctions in approach. Even though Jabra, for example, repeatedly distanced his own work from Sartre's existentialism, his radical romanticism chimed in with one of the clusters Klemm discusses: the 'writers' individual sense of responsibility' during a moment of national crisis. Kanafani also thinks in terms of individual responsibility, but he charts out a different route, one in which resistance literature has specific analytic-definitional values and prescriptive aesthetic qualities.

Palestinian Resistance Literature is thus both a historical explanation of literary form and advocacy. Kanafani is, in fact, the first to provide a materialist analysis of this particular strand of Palestinian literature, and to bring it into focus as engaged literature. Its 'objective conditions' of possibility as cultural form of confrontation and struggle are thus delineated. Those come under two main headings: cultural and political siege under military administration, and peasant-rural social structure. Kanafani begins his book by charting the fundamental transformation in remnant Palestinian society brought about by the *nakba*. Because all major cities were dispossessed and nearly emptied, Palestinians who remained were mostly left in isolated and disconnected villages, without the intellectual and political leadership of urban centres. Add to that a military siege. Imposed during the Israeli military administration from 1948 to 1966, it prevented free movement, restricted political expression and organization, and cut the remnant off from its natural Arab environment and cultural horizon.

What are the specific features of this 'cultural siege'? Kanafani mentions six: a social situation of deprivation that obviates against the production of art; neighbouring cities that could have fostered rural talent turned to hostile enemy terrain; cultural severance from modern Arab literary

trends; the military administration spreading its own distorted literature; limited publishing outlets, subjected to strict control by the Israeli authorities; and, finally, a weak knowledge of foreign languages leading to further disconnection from world literature (11–12). These factors generated a distinct form of cultural production: a traditional and easily transmitted form of poetry that could be communicated and shared orally in demonstrations and gatherings in the small cities and villages of the Galilee and the Triangle.

If, as a result of the siege, the 48 Palestinian remnant missed the boat of poetic experimentation and free verse that was all the rage in Beirut and Baghdad (as practised by Palestinian exiles Jabra and Tawfiq Sayigh), it was pushed towards utilizing traditional cultural forms for more urgent and immediate political purposes: those of defending and maintaining Arab cultural identity under threat of extinction. This generated a poetry that was, Kanafani argues, 'popular-poetry'. Harking back to the earlier Palestinian anti-colonialism of the 1930s and 1940s, it was both more traditional and more popular in appeal than Jabra's or Sayigh's more experimental versifications. Social and political attachments and engagements were voiced as poets drew on their distinct social position within popular movements such as Communism and Arab nationalism.

Kanafani is very clear on the fact, though, that there was nothing predetermined or inevitable about these poetic choices. Going against the grain of Israel's oppression and its willful distortion of collective Palestinian identity was a conscious act of self-definition. An alienated and marginalized group, orphaned and forced into minority status by the *nakba*, abandoned and besieged, challenged its persecutors in both poetry and politics. For Kanafani, this resistance poetry is as important as armed struggle: it is the foundation that breeds active resistance. He dubs the remnant's main cultural agent a 'combatant writer' [*al-adīb al-muqātil*] (51), and defines his art as leftist, anti-imperialist, and socially progressive:

> In the period between 1948 and 1968, Arab intellectuals in occupied Palestine presented, under the worst conditions of repression and cultural imprisonment, a historical model for resisting culture, with all its awareness, consciousness, steadfastness, and steeliness. More importantly, with all its continuity, upsurge, and depth.[11] (85)

The literary word is sacrosanct. And to be committed is to acknowledge its value. Yet the writer's responsibility is to utilize it in order to develop emancipatory social and political values as well. Committed literature, then, has three main features – and it is here that Kanafani clearly defines

its contours, and its desired effects for the Arab world. First, it is connected to 'a social horizon' and is 'loyal to the toiling class' who bear arms and safeguard the destiny of the resistance. Second, it is committed to 'revolutions of liberation' around the world. Third, it is organically connected to the Arab horizon, acknowledging the authenticity and necessity of a socially progressive outlook (147).

If Kanafani sounds artistically prescriptive here, it is because he is. As he clearly states in *Mawaqif* in 1970, the connection between artistic and ethical values is very strong: It is difficult for artistically superior literature not to be politically and socially revolutionary, and be uncommitted humanistically; both being organically connected.[12] I'll show below how Kanafani's imperatives function in his *Returning to Haifa*, where narrower and more overtly ideological Palestinian nationalist tropes (like war and armed struggle) come to jar against broad humanist commitments. What marks Kanafani's recommendations out from his own censure against politicizing literature is their humanism. If, for Kanafani, Zionist literature is propagandistic (as he demonstrates, for comparative effect, in the same work), it is because it forces anti-humanist ideological positions on its characters, legitimizing and justifying both Zionism and the erasure of Palestinian rights and presence.[13] Both the 'humanist value' of art and its artistic quality are ravaged by such Zionist imperatives (78). Not so with Palestinian literature for Kanafani: exactly because it is founded on a just struggle against colonial expropriation. So the only way for Kanafani to adjudicate between nationalisms is through their relationship to humanism. One nationalism is acceptable and progressive because humanist while another is unacceptable and reactionary because anti-humanist. Justifiability depends on the kind of cause that one happens to advocate, as Kanafani insists in *Returning to Haifa*. If the Palestinian form is anti-colonial and anti-oppressive, the Zionist one is colonial and dispossessing. Realistic portrayal has to account for that if it is to remain faithful to the truth. His charge is that Zionist literature fails on this score, and distorts the truth. If artistic prescription can be justified at all, it is only in order to serve a just cause: as a way of deepening humanist attachments and artistic worth. This is how Kanafani defends his own literary and political commitments: on the basis of universal freedom and justice.

What Kanafani ultimately takes from the resistance literature he discusses, and this is what I want to emphasize, is its challenge to an oppressive status quo: the notion of the transformability of the historical present and the possibility of building a free and just future.[14] This is the core

value that resistance literature imbues in him and that he comes to recommend to others: a hope and anticipation that through struggle a better life can be had. *Resistance Literature* comes to register his shift from *Men in the Sun*'s despair to *Returning to Haifa*'s pregnant anticipations. It marks his shift from a naturalist depiction of helplessness and futility to a more active mode of representing agency and counter-hegemonic struggle.

If Jabra before him cut his teeth on the revolt of 1936, Kanafani's generation was much more determined by the *nakba*. That was his main experiential event, and this meant that it took Palestinian emergence itself to change the way he writes about the Palestinians, nudging him away from his early despair to a sense of the positive transformability of the present. Kanafani comes to recognize the revolt intellectually and poetically as a precursor of the 'resistance poetry' of the 1960s. With Palestinian emergence, it becomes a key moment in his and his generation's worldview. Jabra's trajectory and mode of response is different, and more susceptible to the constitutive pressures of pre-*nakba* revolt. His revolt-inflected anti-feudalism comes to mark his response to the Arab environment post-*nakba*, and possibilities and struggles for change are seen all around him as result. That will happen to Kanafani after 1967, and will change his realism.

***Men in the Sun* (1963)**

Men in the Sun is a classical depiction of the powerlessness of dispossession. Haunted by nostalgia for a lost past, the three exiled Palestinians who make arrangements in Iraq with a fourth to be smuggled over the border into Kuwait in the empty water tank of a truck end up dead, their bodies dumped on a pile of garbage heap in the middle of the desert. Their sheer impotence and failure to meet the challenges of exile is recognition of the difficulty of overcoming stateless alienation and atomization. Deeply involved in their own individual lives and pasts, their separateness is thus never overcome. Their common act only leads to death. Which is the denouement of the plot. Even in death, the story suggests, they were unresisting. Why didn't they knock on the sides of the tank? This question resonates at the end. As critic Muhammad Siddiq put it: 'For fear of drawing the attention of the outside world to their existence, they succumb to their death without a single knock on the walls of the empty tank.'[15] This act of resignation is evoked in the passive tense of the title *Men in the Sun*: they will always be men in the sun, as if permanently caught in that situation and overpowered by the elements. Indeed, as Mary N. Layoun argues, the novel's structural features 'are rather ominous portents of the

narrative fate of the four Palestinians.'[16] As Kanafani's diary shows, his sense of desperation was quite pronounced at the time: 'The only thing we know is that tomorrow will be no better than today, and that we are waiting on the banks, yearning for a boat that will not come. We are sentenced to be separated from everything – except from our own destruction.'[17]

Men in the Sun is very much a working-class novel, a novel about dispensable and ejected migrant labour. It is a marked shift in Palestinian literature from Jabra's focus on intellectuals. Kanafani's protagonists are poor and deprived refugees.[18] As Radwa 'Āshūr argues in her excellent study of Kanafani's fiction, 'In most of Ghassan Kanafani's stories the national question is connected with (linked to) the class question. Kanafani creates many crushed characters that throb with life and that testify to their creator's existential and intellectual conviction that the tragedy of losing a homeland is first of all a tragedy of the poor.' Rural background and connection to the land is emphasized in the first sentence: 'Abu Qais rested on the damp ground, and the earth began to throb under him with tired heartbeats, which trembled through the grains of sand and penetrated the cells of his body.'[19] Face down, it is as if he is crucified, dying, even as images of life and love are registered:

> Every time he breathed the scent of the earth, as he lay on it, he imagined he was sniffing his wife's hair when she had just walked out of the bathroom, after washing with cold water. The very same smell, the smell of a woman who had washed with cold water and covered his face with her hair while it was still damp. The same throbbing, like carrying a small bird tenderly in your hands. (21; 37)

These invocations, memories of desire and contact, are contrasted with the harsh environment of the present:

> He turned himself over and lay on his back, cradling his head in his hands. He started to stare at the sky. It was blazing white, and there was one black bird circling high up, alone and aimless. He did not know why, but he was suddenly filled with a bitter feeling of being a stranger, and for a moment he thought he was on the point of weeping. (21–22; 38)

The past is about life and dignity. And memories of resistance and self-sacrifice figure in novel through Abu Qais' school teacher Ustaz Salim. These are contrasted with the aimless waiting, nostalgia, and alienation of the present:

> In the last ten years you have done nothing but wait. You have needed ten big hungry years to be convinced that you have lost your trees, your house, your youth, and your village. People have been making their own

> way during these long years, while you have been squatting like an old dog in a miserable hut. What do you think you were waiting for? (26; 46)

The novel is very much about waiting and futile attempts at change. As the question here shows, conscious rejection is present, but no clear alternative to the *status quo* is yet apparent. In a world dominated by money and narrow self-interest with no social or national solidarity to speak of, how can alienation and exile be overcome? Such questions resonate in the novel, and are left without answers or solutions. The most significant comes at the end, as Kanafani cries out in outrage against the scandal of powerlessness and dispossession: why didn't they knock on the walls of the tank?[20] 'Why' anticipates an absent 'when'. Kanafani's commitment to realism prevents him from doing more, or from having his protagonists knock. There is neither heavenly nor earthly solace from impotent exile in the novel. God is absent, and religion is seen as irrelevant (Ustaz Salim doesn't even know how to pray). Local Arab society feeds on Palestinian weakness and vulnerability rather than alleviating it, setting up obstacles for travel, work, and opportunities to live in dignity. Palestinians suffer their refugeedom in isolation. Defeat and dispersal push them apart: 'More than at any time in the past he felt alien and insignificant' (25; 45).

Ten years since 1948 have passed and nothing much has changed. 'Ten years' litters Kanafani's early fiction: his short stories constantly mark its passing; its presence is both suffocating and provocative. As if asking: 'Till when?' (or, as Fairuz would mournfully put it: 'Another day has passed'). *Men in the Sun* makes clear that the present for Palestinian refugees is about soulless and dubious interactions, money and opportunism, corruption and empty promises. There is no return, fulfillment, prospects, power, or dignity in existent society. As the driver Abul Khaizuran puts it to Marwan, another migrant Palestinian: 'I am glad you are going to Kuwait, because you will learn many things there. The first thing you will learn is: money comes first, and then morals' (42; 84). Self-interest trumps commonalities and solidarities. *Men in the Sun* thus exposes Kuwait itself, as Mai Al-Nakib elegantly argues: 'The percepts and affects Kanafani's stories extract – disappointment, entrapment, alienation, disjointedness, avarice, suffocation, exclusion, classicism and divisiveness, among many others – undergirded the formation of the soon-to-be independent nation-state, with implications for all its citizens and residents, not only the Palestinians.'[21] Capitalist Kuwait as an obstacle to self-determination: that too dehumanizes poor Palestinian exiles.

By the time Kanafani writes *Returning to Haifa*, such realist pessimism is overcome. Unlike his *Men in the Sun*, activity is the order of the day

in *Returning to Haifa*. But between these two novels, Kanafani published *All That's Left to You* in 1966.[22] It's worth pausing here briefly because this transitional novel raises compelling issues about Kanafani's trajectory and artistic form. As many critics note, this is Kanafani's 'most complex and most experimental novel.'[23] To help the reader, Kanafani includes 'A Clarification' at the beginning of the text in which he explains that two of the five characters in the novel are inanimate (Time and Desert). And that the narrative develops in a 'series of disconnected lines which occasionally come together', 'so that there appears to be no clear distinction between places and times which are far removed from each other, or indeed between places and times at a single moment' (xxi; 159). To aid comprehension and distinguish between the five characters' voices and thoughts, without rupturing the novel's continuous 'single burst' style, Kanafani chooses to change the typeface at specific points in the text so that 'the points of disjuncture, blending and transition – which usually occur without preliminaries – should be clearly designated.' No wonder Kanafani relays the following detail following about the history of the novel's composition: 'Last night I finished writing my new novel, and when I lay the pen down and got up to leave the room, something strange happened. Willy Faulkner was standing there shaking my hand in congratulation.'[24] What all this clearly suggests is that Kanafani thought about *All That's Left* as a modernist experiment in form. If in *Men in Sun* his use of flashbacks and multiple narration served realist purposes and conveyed the contours of a fundamentally knowable world, here doubt and disorientation are experienced and embodied in the text's form not just realistically narrated. By omitting core realist assumptions, Kanafani shows how hard it is to make elementary epistemological and temporal distinctions. Narrative causality and development is replaced by the intersectionality and the constellation of unrelated events happening simultaneously that need to be understood in relation to each other. All that is left, according to Kanafani, are pieces and events, fragments to relate to one another.

Yet, being an amalgamation of narrative voices also means that the novel contains elements which jar against the narrative's disorienting effect: cohesive and consequential moments. One such clear moment is the self-defining and self-emancipating act that closes the novels. It is not only Kanafani's most feminist act but also his most active and decisive ending.[25] Maryam, one of the novella's three main human protagonists, decides to end her oppressor's life after he tries to violently force her to abort their child: 'I came bouncing off the wall towards it, like a rubber doll. My fists grabbed the knife, each hand pressing on the handle,

tense and sure of purpose. We rushed together in a head-on confrontation, looking each the other straight in the eye. The blade projected from my tightly closed hands' (49; 233). The violent act is life affirming and brings freedom. But it too is attenuated by a refusal to act the same way in a parallel situation: her brother Hamid's refusal to kill the Israeli soldier whom he holds hostage in the desert after his troubled escape from Gaza. How to explain this anomaly? Siddiq is right to see that 'it vividly demonstrates Kanafani's responsible, at times manifestly anguished, searching for ways to come to grips with the existence of the Israeli adversary … [and is part of] the Palestinian protagonists' recognition of the problematic nature of the relationship that binds them together in a deadly conflict'.[26] What to do about Israelis and how to resolve the entanglement is the key question of *Returning to Haifa*. In *All That's Left to You*, the violent emergence of the new Palestinian is symbolized by Maryam and not by her guerrilla brother. This deliberate reversal accentuates the whole question of the legitimacy and morality of violent struggle. She is forced to kill in a moment of self-defence, while Hamid refuses to choose to kill a hostage soldier. *All That's Left to You* is Kanafani's aesthetically over-determined search for the self-emancipating act and his guarded rumination on its ethical underpinnings.

By the time he writes *Returning to Haifa*, self-willed and self-directed action opens rather than ends the narrative. The 'return' of the title epitomizes the switch in tone, perspective, and literary concern. 'Returning' is also a continuous process: one will always be returning, until one settles. So the novel declares itself as an account of this movement. It also announces an alternative to the Kuwait's privileging of money over morality. A new set of values is introduced to undermine this suffocating *status quo*: actively humanist, hopeful, and searching for solutions. The 'why' of *Men in the Sun* and the 'when and where' of *All That's Left* change to 'how' in *Returning to Haifa*. Confrontation and encounter with the enemy are the order of the day here. Transformation of conditions rather than evasion or acquiescence in injury and want becomes key. If *Men in the Sun* is about the resignations of refugeedom, *Returning to Haifa* is about their conscious overcoming. Actualism and atomization are shunted aside by possibility and collective agency in a knowable and changeable present.

The underlying cause of Kanafani's formal and stylistic shift is historical. Independent Palestinian self-organization becomes pronounced in the mid 1960s. The objective conditions of Arab defeat in 1967 provide historic conditions of possibility, and allow Palestinians to constitute an alternative to Arab loss and disillusionment. After 1967, the Palestinian *fidā'i*

takes over the mantle of Arab revolt. As Ahmad Khalifeh has argued, this affects Kanafani's work in profound ways. In 'The World of the Palestinian Question in the Literature of Ghassan Kanfani', he argues that Kanafani's literature is a 'faithful mirror' of Palestinian reality: 'A great upheaval takes place in [Kanafani's] world, parallel to the upheaval that was taking place inside the world of the Palestinian people itself in material reality.'[27] A historic turning point impacts Kanafani's political and aesthetic concerns. 1965 is a transitional point in his work, when the quiet and clandestine emergence of Palestinian revolt is felt and conveyed in works like *All That's Left*. The real shift and explosion comes in 1967, though. Before:

> What first draws one's attention in this world is that it is pulled to the past in a frightening way, and that it is a world without optimism or joy. The present not only doesn't offer the heroes of this world with any compensation at all, it devours them instead, continuously. As for the future, it is more than a big black hole in their soul, it is a psychological impossibility. They feed on feelings of regret, bitterness, and impotent anger, and the only thing that keeps them alive is the blind will to survive … And the only celebration in this world is celebrating the martyred, who died defending their homeland in the battles of 1948. (156)

After 1967, there's collective resistance and challenge. As in *Umm Sa'd* of 1969:

> The language is simple and composition is direct, without recourse to symbolism or complex technique. It seems almost like an exact replica of the world of refugee camps in 1969 in terms of the topic at hand, the Palestinian question. The revolution has struck roots in the camps and started transforming them into revolutionary energy, and the Palestinian *fidā'i* is as big and bright as the sun, the future is green and full of hope, and the past is a lesson and a warning, not a whip with which the Palestinian flagellates himself. (164)

Umm Sa'd crystallizes refugee emergence and voice. Kanafani presents her as both the keeper of the flame and the nurturer of resistance. She epitomizes selfless giving to the cause. And Kanafani effectively hands over the reigns of the narrative to her by having his narrator interview her. She writes her own life story. For Elias Khoury, this resolves the duality of intellectuals/masses, an issue that was so prevalent after 1967, to the advantage of the masses (in contrast to Halim Barakat or Jabra's fictions which foreground what Khoury calls 'the impotent and alienated intellectual'): 'Kanafani the writer and artist gives up his subjectivity and ultimately melts in the sea of the masses.'[28] This puts Kanafani, Khoury concludes, on 'the difficult, long, and complicated road' of building 'a

revolutionary art and a revolutionary culture which will become an active weapon alongside other weapons in the battle of revolution and liberation.'[29]

Yet, if such an endorsement suggests intellectual abnegation of responsibility, or a sense that all intellectuals need to do is celebrate mass sentiment, then it would not be an accurate reflection either of Kanafani's post-1967 fiction or of his politics. If Palestinians were initially swept up by armed struggle and the revolutionary promise of 1967, then Kanafani was very mindful that spontaneous acts, what he called in his later unfinished novel (*The Blind and the Deaf*) the 'taq taq group', who merely perform their resistance by firing in the air, would never lead to liberation. In an important study of the Palestinian resistance movement that he published in the progressive magazine *Mawaqif* (as part of an issue dedicated to critiquing the Palestinian revolution), he clearly argued that post-Karamah mass spontaneity, without clear organization, education, and strategy, will lead nowhere. Though he clearly states in one piece after another in *al-Hadaf* (which he founded in 1969 and edited until his death in 1972) that everything ultimately depends on the masses (as Fanon thought too), a position contrasted with earlier Arab petit-bourgeois nationalism, he is clear that theory and revolutionary thought are now indispensable instruments in liberation struggles.[30] There's no sense of intellectual abnegation in the name of spontaneous revolt or populism.

'The Current Crisis of *Fidā'i* Work' (1970) focuses on three areas of revolutionary shortcoming (theory, practice, and organization). Kanafani argues that the Palestinian revolution is in a state of stagnation (*rukūd*) after the initial bout of al-Karamah in 1968, when Palestinian guerrillas, joined by the Jordanian army, stood their ground and forced the Israeli army to retreat from the East Bank of Jordan. This Fatah-led act resulted in a massive surge in volunteers to the guerrilla organizations, making the Palestinian revolution a popular alternative to surrounding Arab defeat, and to sloganeering and self-deception. The biggest problem Kanafani saw is that of a lack of realism and rational calculation in constructing Palestinian strategy and meeting the challenge and opportunity of this political victory. Revolutionary expectations exceeded the harsh objective conditions of struggle that Palestinians found themselves in.[31] There was more mass Arab support than capacity for organization and mobilization: empty propaganda filled the gap.

What was needed was clear revolutionary theory that organically stemmed from the specificity of Palestinian existence. The Palestinian question was determined by both colonial dispossession and imperial

sponsorship. What was required of Palestinians is a strategy to address both. Kanafani raised many urgent questions. How is the Palestinian revolution related to the Arab revolution? Isn't class capitulation a form of national capitulation? What is the best democratic organizational form that allows for mass mobilization, revolutionary education, and collective leadership? How to build a new politics that transforms rather than reflects backward traditions and customs? Indeed: how can inauspicious structural conditions be overcome, and do Palestinians have the power and capacity to do so themselves? These become Kanafani's main concerns in the short period between 1967 and his assassination in 1972.

What's significant to emphasize for the purposes of my argument is that revolutionary realism animates Kanafani's political analysis, not empty sloganeering or revolutionary romanticism. Kanafani shuns Fatah's spurious arguments about the non-ideological nature of the Palestinian struggle, and Arafat's gun tapping gestures as a response to every political question. Kanafani argues that the liberation of Arab man and society is a whole project of social and political transformation, requiring deep self-emancipation.

This was also Sadiq al-Azm's position. Al-Azm, who was close to the Palestinian resistance and worked on the Palestinian journal *Shu'un Filasṭīniyya* until he was expelled by Arafat in 1971, produced some of the best critiques of both Arab petit-bourgeois nationalism and Palestinian nationalism in this period. His *A Critical Study of the Thought of the Palestinian Resistance* (1973) is an unrivalled analysis of the class limits of Palestinian nationalism. The basic component of his argument in both *Self-Criticism After the Defeat* and *A Critical Study* is that the Arab defeat of 1967 'was tied directly to the prevalent economic, cultural, scientific, and civilizational conditions in the Arab nation, that is it was a reflection and expression of those conditions.'[32] The current petit-bourgeois leadership could neither overcome, defeat, nor liberate Palestine unless they tackled such deep-seated conditions. In order to do so, revolution needs to be extended from the political to the cultural and economic levels. This includes a struggle for women's rights and social justice, against Arab social conservatism and exploitation. A deep Arab-wide mobilization is required to overcome defeat, underdevelopment, and Israeli colonialism, and this can only be achieved if women are free and workers are no longer oppressed and exploited: 'the June defeat showed that the socialist Arab revolution is not sufficiently revolutionary and not sufficiently socialist.'

For al-Azm, 'There is, no doubt, no life in the Arab revolutionary movement except in its reliance, to the greatest extent, on the popular will,

the working masses, and the toiling classes as the rising historical force.' And this includes a 'revolutionary correction' of backward mentalities and archaic values among the masses. What al-Azm wants is a social revolution in the Arab East. He argues that if Russia responded to its defeat by Japan in 1904 with revolution (democratic in 1905 and socialist in 1917), then the Arabs can also overcome military defeat by social revolution. Class struggle and popular mobilization based on progressive principles become the means of realizing modern socialist development and justice for the Palestinians. Within a couple of years, however, and as a result of counter mobilization by Arab reactionary regimes, this option ceases to be historically possible. An emerging social revolution is soaked in oil money, as opportunism trumps militancy. The revolution is thus bureaucratized and ended.

The Palestinians who rose politically in 1967 had a choice in how to harness the popular energy and support that they were getting from the Arab masses. Either squander it by repeating Nasserite 'middle roadism' and petit-bourgeois political vacillation, or radicalize by transforming the conditions that led to Arab and Palestinian defeat in the first place.[33] As al-Azm's quote from the radical Fatah revolutionary Husam al-Khatib makes clear, what this basically meant was 'a revolution within the revolution'. Rather than succumb to surrounding conditions, Palestinians and radical Arabs should actively transform them through popular mobilization and through 'an *intifada* of the self [or self-*intifada*] within the revolution'.[34] Such revolutionary reorganization was necessary, both al-Khatib and al-Azm argued, especially after Black September 1970 in which a Western-and-Israeli-backed Jordanian monarchy crushed the Palestinian resistance in Amman, killing and injuring thousands and expelling the rest. Revolutionary transformation is essential to avoid another Black September – if it's not already too late.

This post-1967 revolutionism is what animates *Returning to Haifa*.[35] What's crucial is not the standard advocacy of armed struggle (as the last sentences of the novel suggest) but most of what preceded it: confrontation of the enemy and construction of a revolutionary morality based on justice and mutuality. On what basis can the Palestinian question be resolved when Jewish victims of history have ended up dispossessing and victimizing others? This too is part of the specificity of the Palestinian question. Auschwitz survivors meet their victims in *Returning to Haifa*, bringing out the human texture and complexity of Israel–Palestine. What values should Palestinians uphold in their struggle to redeem their land and realize their denied rights?

***Returning to Haifa* (1969)**

It is one of the ironies of history that the residents of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza were only able to visit their homes lost in 1948 (i.e. in Israel proper) when Israel occupied the rest of Palestine in 1967. Their return is therefore undertaken under ambiguous circumstances, resulting from further Arab defeat, further domination, and not from the hoped for liberation. For the first time since 1948, Palestine became whole again. This unity-under-occupation allowed for not only a reconnection of separate parts of the Palestinian nation but also a reconnection with the past, as the literature of the period clearly shows. The return of Said S. and his wife Safiyya to revisit their home in Kanafani's novel is thus part of this wider historical process. The novel opens with their silence. Silence binds them as soon as they come to the edge of Haifa. Then, all of a sudden, the past hails down on them 'the way a stone wall collapses, the stones piling up, one upon another'.[36] Their repressed memories erupt 'as though forced out by a volcano' (151; 344). Time and history are major preoccupations through which dispossession is narrated. Whether in flashbacks, authorial intervention, or digression, the events of 1948 continuously sweep through the narrative. The heart of the tragedy, it soon becomes evident, lies in the fact that the couple when fleeing were forced not only to abandon their home but their infant child Khaldun as well. The Jewish immigrant couple who take over their house, Miriam and Iphrat Koshen, thus also inherit their son, whom they rename Dov. Questions of homeland, parenthood, and appropriation are raised by their tense and skilfully handled encounter. Miriam is the first humanized portrait of the enemy in Arabic literature.[37] Her story is told with impeccable honesty, in its full complexity and multi-dimensionality. An Auschwitz survivor, she ends up coming to Palestine in 1948, and soon decides to leave when she witnesses the brutality of the Jewish army towards the Arab indigenous population. After she sees two soldiers flinging a dead Arab child into the back of a truck, her husband asks her: 'How did you know it was an Arab child?', she replies: 'Didn't you see how they threw it onto the truck, like a piece of wood? If it had been a Jewish child they would never have done that' (169; 381). Such degradation and unequal regard troubles her. What keeps her in Palestine, ironically, is the infant Khaldun. Unable to have her own children, Khaldun becomes her reason for staying. Kanafani explains her presence by recourse to humanist motivations, making it hard for Arab readers to reduce her presence to an effect of Zionism. In that way, Kanafani opens up a space for a non-Zionist portrayal of Jewish

characters in fiction about Israel–Palestine, in complete contrast to the Zionist fiction he critiqued in his work on Zionist literature.[38] European Jewish nationalism and its mythical history are also far from Miriam's own considerations and concerns. And yet she ends up occupying a house which she recognizes as belonging to someone else. She even tells its original occupants when they finally come to knock on her door: 'I have been expecting you for a long time … You are the owners of this house. I know that' (163; 366). This portrayal of motivations and eventualities forces the reader to recognize not only the humanity of the other but the complexity of the human condition which resulted from 1948. Though in their eyes, and in her own, she is a colonizer, her humanity is not negated by Kanafani. In fact, it's enhanced, exactly because he believes that only through a consideration of the nuanced reality of the situation, and through the safeguarding of human dignity for all, can any sort of resolution be achieved.

Even though the novel evokes the necessity of armed struggle at the end, supporting the main character's idea that only another war will resolve this confrontation, Kanafani seems more inclined to favour a moral rather than a military confrontation. And this is the main force of the novel. Kanafani affirms Palestinian existence not in order to negate that of the other but to transform it. As the main protagonist Said S. tells Dov: 'Man, in the final analysis, is a cause. That's what you said. And it's true. But what cause? That's the question!' (183; 404). And adds:

> When are you going to stop considering that the weakness and the mistakes of others are endorsed over to the account of your own prerogatives? … You must come to understand things as they should be understood. I know that one day you'll realize these things, and that you'll realize that the greatest crime any human being can commit, whoever he may be, is to believe even for one moment that the weakness and mistakes of others give him the right to exist at their expense and justify his own mistakes and crimes. (185; 410–411)

Homeland for Said S. is a place where none of this can happen, where weaknesses are not exploited and rights not negated, and where mutuality and equality are the order of the day. This is the universal Palestine of the future which the novel hankers for. The discursive power of *Returning to Haifa* lies here: in situating the whole question of Palestine and the whole Jewish question of persecution in universal terms. These now interlinked questions are not about nationalist struggle and possessive expropriation, but about categories that all humans can share in and understand: home, fairness, not exploiting human weaknesses, non-domination of others,

etc. The abstract tinge is significant as it allows Kanafani to zoom out of narrow motivations and power dynamics and to show how principles of justice and mutuality are universal. No human being should be forcibly evicted from their home, and no human being has a right to force another into a life of exile and want. If everyone upheld these values, Kanafani seems to suggest, beyond the claims of nationalisms, then the question of Palestine would be resolved and colonialism would end.

Edward Said would dub this 'the Palestinian idea':

> I had to keep saying that Palestinians were not only the opponents and victims of Zionism, they also represented an alternative: This was what they embodied in fighting for the idea of Palestine, non-exclusivist, secular, democratic, tolerant, and generally progressive ideology, not about colonizing and dispossessing people but about liberating them. I was always trying to abide by universalist principles and yet be critical and concrete at the same time.[39]

Since universalist principles can have several different institutional forms, there's no need to argue that Kanafani by believing in equality and mutuality was upholding the one-state solution. It is hard to ask of novels to come out for one specific political-institutional form or another.[40] And, if anything, Kanafani was a revolutionary socialist in this period and upheld the political position that only a unified Arab-wide revolution against both imperialism and Arab authoritarianism would resolve the Palestinian question. This is a far cry from resolving the Palestinian question in the Palestinian box. What matters for my purposes is that *Returning to Haifa* advances a humanist revolutionary morality of homeland-as-justice, potentially applicable to both Palestinians and Israelis. It is such an alternative vision that Kanafani and Said culturally share, even as they disagree about its specific political-institutional form: Palestine can provide a universalist future for all.

The novel, then, ends on an open-ended note. If, like in *Men in the Sun*, resignation is death, here contradiction, struggle, and resistance are life. By working with the complexity of contemporary relationships, literature raises up a model of engagement for politics to pursue. It is to Kanafani's lasting credit that he therefore conceives of a future where adversaries are no longer in a state of negative dialectic, no longer opposites. *Returning to Haifa* can thus be read as his contribution to the realization of this goal.

Before I consider Habiby's work, it is worth showing that such Palestinian humanism had universal applicability. The Palestinian revolutionary moment was seen as universal and pregnant with human

reciprocity and mutuality – even, importantly, by outsiders to the Arab world.[41] There is one European text that captures this seamless political translatability of revolt: Jean Genet's *Prisoner of Love*. Because it is so entangled with the Palestinian revolution captured by Kanafani, I examine it here. It too belongs with the notion of Palestinian emancipation.

Jean Genet's *Prisoner of Love* (1986)

At the height of Palestinian mobilization in Jordan in 1970, Genet was invited to spend time with the Palestinian resistance, with a view of writing a book-length account of his experience. The book was left undone, but he did publish an essay on 'The Palestinians' for *Journal of Palestine Studies* instead. After the Sabra and Shatila massacre in Beirut in 1982, all his memories of his sojourn with the Palestinians in 1970 came rushing back. He immediately returned to Beirut, and was one of the first people to be let into the camps. The harrowing account of what he witnessed, 'Four Hours in Shatila', was published soon after. Beirut 1982 nudges him to revisit his 1970 idea of a book on the meaning of the Palestinian revolution. Tragedy evokes memory, and *Prisoner of Love* is the result, published posthumously. To grapple with the destruction and death of Sabra and Shatila, he remembers 1970: 'the faint intoxication, the lightness of footsteps barely touching the earth, the sparkle in the eyes, the openness of relationships not only between the fedayeen but also between them and their leaders'.[42] Writing as mourning here becomes for Genet a mode of witnessing, and of resisting dehumanization in Beirut and the gloom of contemporary bourgeois morals. His achievement is that he has made it impossible to think about the global significance of Palestinian revolt without invoking *Prisoner of Love*.

Genet wasn't alone in undertaking this Arab journey. Several prominent radical European intellectuals visited an Arab world in revolt, including Jean-Paul Sartre and Jean-Luc Godard. Godard, like Genet, was invited by Fatah to witness the emergence of the new guerrilla movement, and his film *Ici Et Ailleurs* (1976) with Anne-Marie Miéville is similar in both its genuine commitment to revolutionism and in its artistic and political self-questioning which his sojourn with the *fedayeen* generates. Godard's Palestine, like Genet's, also becomes an occasion for asking questions about everyday capitalist life in France. For both, Palestine is part of a universal narrative of emancipation. That is not the case for Sartre, and it's worth flagging his response here if only to appreciate Genet's in *Prisoner of Love*. For Sartre, Israel–Palestine signifies the limit of his universal

intellectual commitments, rather than just another occasion to rehearse them. The anti-colonial continuum from Algeria to Vietnam stops at the edge of Tel-Aviv, as Jonathan Judaken shows in *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*: ambivalence, silence, vacillation, divided loyalties, neutrality, and criticizing both sides become Sartre's mode of response. 'I find myself', Sartre says, 'torn between contradictory friendships and loyalties … Today, we find that the Arab world and Israel are opposed and we are divided within ourselves and we therefore live this opposition as if it was our personal tragedy.'[43] Judaken reads this as Sartre's articulation of 'différend', an anticipation of the post-structuralist model of the 'specific' or 'postmodern' intellectual where universal measures and commonalities collapse. Israel–Palestine here becomes an exception to the anti-colonial model articulated in Sartre's powerful introduction to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (which led Fanon's widow to denounce Sartre and ask for his introduction to be removed from future editions). Israel is the limit of the universal for Sartre, where colonial nationalism could be resisted no more. Genet's achievement in *Prisoner of Love* thus becomes all the more pronounced.[44]

In 1970, Genet arrived in Jordan after the Palestinians had been crushed by the Jordanian army in Amman in Black September but were still holding out in the North. It was a transitional moment, deeply fraught with contradictions, and pregnant with both success and defeat. A situation, therefore, neither settled nor resolved. His is a journey to a revolution, to a time when the order of things has been challenged: 'I had greeted the revolt as a musical ear recognizes a right note.'[45] In the past that note was struck by the Algerians, which led to Genet's play *The Screens*, then by the Black Panthers in the United States and the students of May 1968, and now by the Palestinians.

> It seemed to me that all that interested the fedayeen was how the party was going to end. For it was a party, the Palestinian revolt on the banks of the Jordan.
>
> A party that lasted nine months. To get an idea of what it was like, anyone who tasted the freedom that reigned in Paris in May 1968 has only to add physical elegance and universal courtesy. But the fedayeen were armed. (285)

So this is a Palestinian May '68 and more, a moment of rupture in a history of dispossession and exile, a moment when, as Genet put it, for the Palestinians it meant 'to have been dangerous for a thousandth of a second' (275). Rebellion, danger, celebration. These are Genet's reasons for *going over* (to use that wonderful phrase which became cultural currency

in 1930s Britain). As Edward Said has argued: 'To read Genet is in the end to accept the utterly undomesticated peculiarity of his sensibility, which returns constantly to the area where revolt, passion, death, and regeneration are linked.'[46] He is attracted by the *fedayeen*'s freedom of expression, their affirmation of revolutionary identity, and the challenge they constitute to world order: 'Every country felt threatened by a people without a country' (87). That's why the Palestinians also felt (as Genet himself did in Jordan) suffocated and besieged: 'These were the Palestinians' enemies, in order of importance: the Bedouin, the Circassians, King Hussein, the feudal Arabs, the Muslim religion, Israel, Europe, America, the Big Banks. Jordan won, and so victory went to all the rest, too, from the Bedouin to the Big Banks' (120). And that explains why Genet's account is tinged with mourning and fear of loss.

What attracted him to the Palestinians is exactly what made them enemies of Arab regimes and Western imperialism: the fact that they presented an alternative to Arab cultural dependency on, and political domination by, the West. As uprooted and stateless refugees, Palestinians were structurally placed to transform the Middle East and liberate Palestine from Zionist exclusivism and separation. As he says in a piece written immediately after his early 1970s visits: 'It is doubtless necessary to fight for return to the lost land, but it seems to me even more essential to transform the Arab individual, first by the Palestinian example, and then with the help of the Palestinians.'[47] So the Palestinian revolution embodied the new liberated arab: secular, equal, and free. The task of the Palestinians is to Palestinianize the Arab world, that is move it away from what Genet felt was the 'glamorous and deceptive nostalgia' of Arabism (15). By affirming their existence, the Palestinians were asserting the need for a free Arab East.

For Genet, however, they were doing much more than that. What brought him over to the revolution is not its particularity but its universality. Which is why Genet calls the Palestinian revolution *my revolution.* His book is his own account of things he himself experienced, felt, and thought while there: 'This is *my* Palestinian revolution, told in my chosen order' (355). But a stronger sense of *my* can also be discerned here. After encountering the Palestinian revolution, Genet himself is transformed: humanized. *Prisoner of Love* is full of such examples. In his essay 'The Palestinians' he clearly gives the following example, worth quoting in full because of its centrality to understanding the dynamic of universality:

> while the Palestinian revolution remained to some extent abstract and strange to me, I realized that it had not only changed the Palestinians but

> also changed me. Let me explain. In Europe, out of innate indolence, I used to consider the function, and not the man. The waiter was necessary to put the plate and the glass on the table and to fill the glass, but if he fell ill the plate and the glass would still be put in front of me – another waiter would have taken his place. This happened at all levels and with all functions: every man was exchangeable within the framework of his function and, except in rare cases, we only noticed the function. In the Palestinian camps the opposite happened: I changed in the sense that my relations changed, because all relations were different. No man was exchangeable as a man; we noticed the man only regardless of the function, and the function was not a service to maintain a system, but a fight to smash a system. (8)

So, from *function and exchangeability* in Europe to *non-exchangeable human beings* in Jordan: from exploitative to emancipatory relations. The impact on Genet was irreversible. Amongst revolutionaries, he sees and rejects the inhumanities of Europe in a similar manner to Fanon's new humanism in *Wretched of the Earth*: 'reintroducing mankind into the world, the whole of mankind' in a global process through which 'the European peoples must first decide to wake up and shake themselves, use their brains, and stop playing the stupid game of the Sleeping Beauty' (84). That is the force of the point Genet makes. Through the encounter with revolution, societies are humanized. If the imperialist encounter is mutually dehumanizing for both West and East, the revolutionary encounter is mutually beneficial. Lucien Goldmann has also discussed 'the encounter in his [Genet's] work between an implicit but radical rejection of society and the problems of a still active European intelligentsia which is hostile to today's corporate capitalism'. If Genet is aware of the benefits that industrial society can provide, he is also troubled by what it stifles and leaves unfulfilled. As Goldmann put it: 'this same consumer orientation stifles the deep need for authenticity, for communication with one's fellow men, for the development of one's own intellectual and emotional life'.[48] Social integration goes hand in hand with frustration, hence the release and freedom of revolutionary moments, and Goldmann's argument that Genet's play *The Screens* (with its depiction of an Algerian universal hero who is political in his negativity) may well be 'a turning point in our intellectual and social life' in late 1960s Europe. *Prisoner of Love* both enacts and relives that shift towards a new left defined by its hostility to both economic exploitation and cultural alienation. Gerd-Rainer Horn has captured its essence in *The Spirit of '68*: 'Not just capitalism but authority structures in general were to be opposed. Replacing capitalism with another exploitative and alienating social system would not usher in the end of authoritarian rule. The new left was centrally concerned with the

promotion of anti-hierarchical, anti-institutional, and anti-bureaucratic means and goals. Self-determination and self-management in all walks of life was their ultimate aim.'[49] Genet epitomizes this new left spirit, and finds its echo amongst the Palestinians guerrillas in Jordan.

There is a further point to be made about revolt. Genet's insertion into revolutionary relations enabled him to see the humanity of the oppressed other. Participation determines gaze. By being transformed, he can now go on to humanize others. And this, if anything, is the aim of *Prisoner of Love*: to challenge the racism and Eurocentrism of media image by narrating the ordinary, everyday detail of Palestinian exile and dispossession. Such an aesthetic strategy is epitomized by Genet's choice of image to capture the essence of the revolution: the *fidā'i* Hamza and his mother.

Like the revolution, Hamza and his mother are (at the same time) ordinary and extraordinary; old and new; Palestinian and universal. In fact, typical of the revolution – and as typical as Christ-like self-sacrificers were for Jabra:

> Amid that world, that language, that people, those faces, those animals, plants all exuding the spirit of Islam, what preoccupied me was a group embodying the image of the *mater dolorosa.* The mother and son, but not as Christian artists have depicted them, painted or sculptured in marble or wood, with the dead so lying across the knees of a mother younger than the son de-crucified, but one of them always protecting the other … Each was the armour of the other, who otherwise would have been too weak, too human. (203)

This is the 'Revolution's emblem and seal' for Genet, not victorious battles, political slogans, or programmes. Again Genet sees the revolution in terms of a relationship, again it is one of mutual sustenance and comradeship, and again it haunts him, strikes him, and changes him. It is *his*. And that's the connection he wants to formulate with subordinate others: to find something of yourself in them; indeed, to find yourself in them, that is, not to be able to be yourself without them. Simon Critchely is right to argue that: '*Prisoner of Love* is the fragmentary remembrance of a disappearing community, and as such the book offers only the promise of community, a promise deferred.'[50] But the community is a human one that includes Genet himself. Its universality is key, and its failure leads to imprisoning rather than emancipating love.

That's the real transformative power of what Genet calls his *souvenirs* from Palestine. His philosophy is premised on a particular ethic that Terry Eagleton in *After Theory* calls 'Politicized love, or reciprocity all round': the notion that 'we become the occasion for each other's self-realization. It is

only through being the means of your self-fulfillment that I can attain my own, and vice versa'.[51] This is at the heart of Genet's ambition in *Prisoner of Love*. It is also of course at the heart of the socialist notion that the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. Self-realization is a reciprocal process. However, as the title suggests, it was not to last in Palestine. His love for Palestine ended up imprisoning him. That is why he comes back only with souvenirs, fragments, and meandering digressions, not a full-blown transformation.

After 1973, he says, 'I was still charmed, but I wasn't convinced; I was attracted but not blinded. I behaved like a prisoner of love' (216–217). Hamza is captured, imprisoned, and tortured; and his mother crumbles in the sorrow of loss and defeat. The Palestinians are crushed and defeated, forced out of Jordan to Lebanon. And they are partly to blame for that, Genet suggests, as they failed to win over the local Jordanian population to their cause, failed to 'establish a real bond of common interest between the Jordanian and Palestinian masses' and revolutionize Jordanian society.[52]

What also struck Genet was the revolutionary optimism and self-delusion of the Palestinians that made them confuse 'liberty, independence and the possibility of becoming oneself with that of becoming more comfortable, whereas rebellion calls for rigour and intelligence' (208). This is a confusion that would lead to the bureaucratization of the revolution and to the rise of the statehood option, marking the end of the Arab-wide revolutionary conjuncture. This is a point Genet reiterates about all the revolutions he encounters, as his biographer Edmund White comments: 'he had shown how revolutionary political movements run out of steam once they adopt the symbolism of the enemy (an army, a flag, a hierarchy) and are recuperated by the establishment'.[53]

Prisoner of Love is a tremendous act of solidarity on Genet's part. Its artistic greatness results from its author's political allegiance, as Said states: 'great art in a colonial situation appears only in support of what Genet in *Un Captif* calls the metaphysical uprising of the natives'.[54] Herein lies Said's affirmative celebration of anti-colonial aesthetics. In their struggle against indeterminacy, in what Genet saw as their 'Affirmation of Existence Through Rebellion',[55] the Palestinians contributed to Genet's unceasing effort to call his own society into question. Their revolt thus fortified the internal critique within the West, of which Genet's work is such a powerful example. Their failure, however, leaves not only Genet unfulfilled in love but the Palestinians in a cruel a state of enforced nomadism and alienated exile.

CHAPTER 3

Emile Habiby: capture and cultural escape in The Pessoptimist *(1974)*

'I write only when I'm shaken, shaken to my core', said Emile Habiby weeks before his death on 1 May 1996. Adding: 'my way of crying is through the ink that comes out of the pen'.[1]

The short story 'Mendelbaum Gate' was published in March 1954. It was triggered by his mother's departure through the checkpoint separating West from East Jerusalem, Israel from the Arab world, never to return. As Habiby disclosed many years later in his literary testament *Sirāj al-Ghūleh*, written some months before his death in 1996, his mother crossed over to the Arab side in order to join her other, refugee son in Damascus, her youngest. Habiby knew his mother would never return to Haifa. As she told Habiby: 'But you can stay here. You have your whole life ahead of you and can wait for them [the refugees]'.[2] She could not. Without her expelled son, her life became intolerable. To be with him meant leaving home and homeland behind and dying in exile. For Habiby, his mother's limited options and ultimate choice epitomize the nature of the Palestinian tragedy for 48 Palestinians, those Palestinians who by some historical fluke were left behind after Israel's founding expulsions in 1948. Either they faced national suffocation or risked permanent exile. For many, what jarred against Zionism's newly imposed present of colonial aggression and usurpation were memories of a recent past, of Palestine as part of rather than alienated from the surrounding Arab environment. The Palestinian short story writer Najwa Kawar Farah expressed this well when she compared her own memories of pre-*nakba* Palestine to the experiences of a younger generation's forced adaptation to dispossession: 'They [the younger generation] were not, like me, haunted by the past, not reminded of streets that used to have Arabic names, nor nostalgic about Palestine … I knew I could not go on living with such sadness, such depression.'[3] Like Habiby's mother, Kawar also left Haifa, going with her family through Mendelbaum Gate in 1965. Most 48 Palestinians, however, remained and endured. The barber from Lydda in the documentary *Route 181*: *Fragments*

of a Journey in Palestine-Israel (2003) expresses their predicament when he replies to the directors' question of 'What memory pains you or angers you most [about 1948]?' by saying: 'That all the people we knew went away. Life went with them'.[4]

Palestinians occupied in 1948, like 67 occupied Palestinians later on, witnessed their homeland being daily expropriated. They were cut down and confined by a hostile state that expelled most of their people, destroyed most of their villages, and turned them into an oppressed minority in their own homeland.[5] For Elia Zureik, this amounted to 'internal colonization', a form of domination by a settler-colonial state that institutes policies of 'land expropriation and marginalization of the Arab sector', ensures Jewish demographic dominance through the Law of Return (for Jews only) and the Nationality Act, institutionalizes 'effective systems of social, political, and economic control legitimated by Zionist ideology', and culturally dominates Palestinian existence by controlling their school system and mass media. The general effect, he shows, is that such a settler regime 'creates a justificatory ideology based on the dehumanization of the culture and way of life of the indigenous population'.[6]

Severed remnants of a larger dispersed people, and colonized by newly arrived settlers, the lives of 48 Palestinians thus become over-determined by contradiction and disjuncture: under Israel but not of it, in their homeland but not at home, under military government until 1966 but never freed into equal citizenship in an exclusivist Jewish state. For Shira Robinson, this is how Israel's regime sought 'to render that citizenship and suffrage all but meaningless'. As she concludes in her excellent study *Citizen Strangers*: 'For more than sixty years, Israel's essential paradox has pivoted around its attempt to pursue the Jewish conquest of land and labor while extending individual political rights to the Arab of Palestine who remained after 1948 – to bind voting Palestinians to the state while simultaneously denying them access to it.'[7] Palestinian response to this colonial liberal combination was as complicated and at times as contradictory as the circumstances that shaped them: they fought and submitted; resisted and collaborated; lived in fear and waited in anticipation. Too powerless to overcome their structural marginalization and national defeat, they nonetheless struggled against denied rights and shattered livelihoods. As Palestinian sociologist Ahmad Sa'di argues: 'The[ir] aim is not entirely to change the existing power structure, rather to minimise its negative consequences and to challenge its legitimising ideology.'[8] Which amounts to a political strategy that involves a strong challenge to Israeli

domination and oppression but shuns mass revolt and armed struggle. As Zureik concludes:

> It is a fact that in spite of various episodes of large-scale protest and an increasing level of politicization, the Arabs in Israel have not risen *en masse* to protest their situation. Isolated involvement – with guerrilla attacks mounted from the outside into Israel, particularly those which took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s – notwithstanding, the Arabs in Israel have not posed any significant military or political threat to the Zionist State.

Until liberation comes, staying put and steadfast (*sumūd*), resisting subordination, and demanding civil and political rights, was the best option for 48 Palestinians. For Zureik, this politically implied not only increasing autonomy or self-determination for the oppressed Palestinian minority in Israel, but also suggested something more region-wide as well: 'to hope for a radical change in the structure of political institutions in the Arab world which would resolve the Israeli–Arab conflict in such a way as to settle the entire Palestinian issue once and for all'.[9]

Habiby delivers both in *The Pessoptimist*: resistance and struggle within 1948 as well as the anticipation of outside (Palestinian, Arab, or international) redemption, signified by extra-terrestrial salvation in the novel. Indeed, nobody has captured the national rupture and severance of 48 Palestinians, or their political and material confinement, better than Habiby. The novel follows the changing fortunes of Palestinian Saeed in Israel: his life, family history, collaboration work, marriages, and imprisonment from 1948 to 1967. The 48 Palestinians find in Habiby the storyteller who most clearly articulates their complex position and peculiar tragedy. His greatest work, *The Pessoptimist* (1972–4), is their national-historical novel, marking their distorted 'birth', oppressed and manipulated existence, and final escape to fantasy.

There is, in that sense, much in common between Habiby and Lukács' classical historical novelists in *The Historical Novel*. Like Lukács' protagonists, Habiby's hero is ordinary, middling, mediocre, and thoroughly unheroic, a typical specimen of an untypical group of non-exiled Palestinians. His private life is entangled with history and inexplicable without it. As in Lukács' account of the historical novel's classical phase, *The Pessoptimist* constructs a strong 'connection between the exclusively private individual experiences of characters and historical events':

> Both Scott and Tolstoy created characters in whom personal and social-historical fates closely conjoin. Moreover, certain important and general aspects of popular experience are expressed *directly* in the personal lives of these characters. The genuinely historical spirit of Scott and Tolstoy appears precisely here. Through personal experience these characters come into

> contact with all the great problems of the age; become organically linked with and inevitably moulded by them; yet lose neither their personality nor the immediacy of their experience.[10]

If Habiby is able to express a 'conception of history as the destiny of the people', a Lukácsian 'genuine historicism' (201), he also understands the past as 'a concrete prehistory of the present' (296). So, like his classical realist precursors, Habiby also gives us 'the concrete prehistory of the destiny of the people themselves' (337) and constructs an imaginative representation of historical contradictions. With Habiby, one of Lukács' core preconditions for realist production – the writer's close relationship to the masses, to the collective, and to the wider community – is confirmed (though, as I pointed earlier, it is an analytically weak category). Contact and interaction with mass politics is key to Habiby's self-declared party-political commitments. Unlike Jabra, Habiby lives mass Palestinian life: he is neither distant nor alienated from it. As a communist party leader, long-time editor of the party newspaper *Al-Ittihad*, and a member of the Israeli Knesset for the CP, Habiby was deeply involved in Palestinian politics inside Israel, and deeply integrated into its popular strikes, political demonstrations, and cultural organizations. He was similarly positioned in relation to popular life as Lukács claimed (perhaps less plausibly) Scott was: 'He writes *from* the people, not *for* the people; he writes from their experiences, from their soul' (283).

If, then, Habiby expresses the tragic downfall of Palestinians in 1948, he also conveys their slow national ascendance in the late 1950s and especially after 1967: their growing sense of collective political consciousness and their future possibilities. *The Pessoptimist* captures this contradictory unity between national negation and a robust affirmation of an oppositional humanism – exactly like the anti-imperialist liberation novels that Lukács mentions. Habiby does, in fact, see himself as belonging to this progressive cultural tradition when he says:

> I always want to stress, like all the writers of the Third World, that we have behind us a rich heritage. I do not stick to the old heritage, but I am not a nihilist, and I am against the nihilist attitude towards our heritage. In this, I am one of many, as I understand it, in the Third World, among the downtrodden peoples, in the colonialist world. We have to defend ourselves, our humanity, our equality. Do not look down on us.[11]

What Habiby's novel ultimately shows is the way in which historical self-understanding and self-authoring allows the protagonist to weave together both his own story and that of his shattered people. Writing here becomes a form of self-determination, opening up the possibility for political self-realization in the future.

If the *The Pessoptimist* can be read as a historical novel, can it also be read as a 'national allegory' of 48 Palestinians, as Jameson would suggest? Can one square a classical Lukácsian conception of history with Jameson's less concrete, more allegorical novel form? If Lukács' typical characters can be read as Jameson's 'national allegories', then the answer for Habiby's novel is yes.[12] With one important reservation: taking on board Aijaz Ahmad's powerful criticism of Jameson's totalizing and homogenizing theorization of third-world fiction – as when Jameson argues that '*the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*'.[13] Neither Jameson's *always* nor his *all* literatures of the third world is empirically correct, putting the validity of his whole project into question. Yet what has never been denied in this debate is that certain novels can function as national allegories at certain historical conjunctures. I would argue that *The Pessoptimist* is such an example, and that the protagonist stands as an emblem for the condition of his people: his story resembles their history, his contradictions embody theirs. National determination is constitutive, if not primary, here. In addition, one more sense of allegory is relevant: a more restrictive sense.[14] Allegory is used as an escape from the weight of history and the burdens of reality: fable develops out of the realist thrust of the narrative. Habiby, an expert in amalgamations, combines a searching historical narrative with an allegorical layering of meaning (Lukács himself saw fantasy as compatible with realism, commending both Balzac's and Hoffmann's fantastic tales).[15] Both concrete historical developments and magical-fantastical occurrences structure Habiby's narrative. The year 1948 invokes fabular dimensions for Habiby: politics requires fantasy, and the weight of history can only be gagged by the imaginative energy required to escape it. One question that remains, though, is whether allegorization in Habiby is ultimately a form of Lukácsian disconnect from popular struggle or of Jamesonian utopian affirmation. Both readings are plausible, though Habiby would probably be politically more prone to see his work as a utopian challenge to the present rather than an inability to overcome it. Political pessimism was not an option for this communist leader.

The year 1967 ushered in an intensive period of writing for Habiby. *Sextet of the Six Day War* (1968) is his initial and immediate response to the Palestinian and Arab crisis: a collection of six short stories that approach the moment of 1967 defeat and occupation from the unique standpoint of 48 Palestinians. As Habiby states in his introduction: 'the prisoner for the last twenty years, severed from his people, wakes up one day to hear the hubbub of confused voices in the prison courtyard, only to discover

that all his people have been crammed in there with him. How would he feel meeting them after the long period of severance and loneliness, what a meeting?' (8–9). *Qaṭīʿa* (severance) is the single most important word in *Sextet*. It carries the sense of rupture, an abrupt breaking off of relations, and of estrangement and separation. If Palestinian life was discontinued and interrupted in 1948, it has now resumed, but under even more catastrophic circumstances. If 1948 is *qaṭīʿa* 1967 is flawed unity. As one character puts it in the last sentence of the collection: 'We were united after a long separation under one roof, the roof of the prison cell' (92). Connection is restored, but under shared subjugation.

What the 1967 unity does, however, is allow for remembrance of 1948. During *qaṭīʿa*, people forgot their old selves, old loves, and repressed past. War opens the floodgates of memory, and the 'remaining remnants' (*al-baqīyya al-bāqia*) remember: a teenager's feelings of family belonging, for example, is contrasted with an earlier sense of solitariness; a lover's attempt to reconnect with his lost love is conducted through a search for forgotten and abandoned friends. If the past resurfaces for some, however, it never ceases to be re-lived by others: war here comes as a partial release from the past's strangling hold. Umm al-Rubabika (literally: 'Our Lady of the Odds and Ends') epitomizes this position. We find her surrounded by 48 refugees' abandoned and stolen property (carpets, furniture, love letters), as she awaits the return of their owners. The year 1967 brings them back to Haifa, as it does in Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa*. Here they are 'roaming ghosts' searching for pieces of a lost past – the story's protagonist attempts to unite her keepsakes with their rightful owners.

What *Sextet* ultimately shows is that *qaṭīʿa* is not overcome by 1967. Disconnect remains the order of day. Shared prison-hood is no condition for real connection and exchange. In the same way that the narrative threads of 'Umm al-Rubabika' remain unfinished and incomplete (*batra',* literally meaning amputated), the Palestinian nation remains severed and disrupted, its narrative a collection of snippets and images brought together either by loss and defeat or by shared memories of a distant past. What needs to be overcome, as one character in *Sextet* puts it, is the fact that: 'We only feel our homeland when we hear about the past' (88). The only way out is through all round collective effort, as the narrator of 'Umm al-Rubabika' teasingly concludes: 'Let this story remain *batra'* until we write its ending together' (49). For Habiby, this has specific connotations: writing together is acting together, and entails determining a shared future. Only then will *qaṭīʿa* be overcome. A self-fashioned future thus transcends the everyday tragedy of on-going dispossession. So

it is not only, as Habiby himself states in the introduction to *Sextet*, that culture allows him to 'sigh' and 'curse', compensating for overpowering political constrictions (8). It is very much that fiction breaks the hold of undesired and oppressive facts only in order to turn back on them and change them: literature thus instigates and prepares the ground for free and transformative acts. Culture, then, is not merely compensatory, but potentially transformatory, aiming at substituting itself for the narrow strictures that surround it. In that sense, it is the fantasy that refuses its status as the deferred and unreal: a fiction with ambitions of facticity. *The Pessoptimist* is deeply marked by this desire. If anything, it is a fantasy that seeks realization in collective action, eliminating the pragmatic politics that forced it into existence in the first place. In envisioning transformation as achievable collective outcome, Habiby's novel belongs squarely in the emancipatory-realist conjuncture.

Freedom is, in fact, the hallmark of this most innovative and difficult-to-classify of contemporary Arab novels. Combining satire, irony, and tragicomedy, *The Pessoptimist* is deeply marked by a strong narrative verve. As Edward Said has stated: 'His [Habiby's] epistolary novel is unique in Arabic literature in that it is consistently ironic, exploiting a marvellously controlled and energetic style to depict the peculiarly "outstanding" *and* "invisible" condition of Palestinians inside Israel.'[16] From the beginning, the novel draws attention to its textual status, and foregrounds the act of writing as self-saving. Samih al-Qasim's poem 'Epilogue' (from his 1971 collection 'The Koran of Death and Jasmine') opens the novel:

So, you men!
And women!
You Sheikhs, Rabbis, Cardinals!
You, nurses, and girls in factories –
How long must you wait
The postman with those letters
You so anticipate,
Across the dead-dry barriers?
And you, you men!
And you, women!
Don't wait still more, don't wait!
Now, off with your sleep-clothes
And to yourselves compose
Those letters you anticipate! (1, 5)[17]

Saeed, the main protagonist, takes this advice seriously. He writes letters to the narrator, and those come to constitute the novel. By becoming an

author, Saeed writes himself back into being, retrieving his lost agency and overpowered selfhood. In the opening chapter, he quizzes the narrator on his whereabouts and on the causes behind his disappearance. Neither dead, expelled, imprisoned, nor a guerrilla, is it not surprising, he jests ironically, that the disappearance of a common man is not noticed?

> No problem [he retorts]. What matters is that my disappearance, for all its weirdness, was something I'd been expecting all my life. Anyway, the miracle did occur, fine sir, and I did indeed meet with creatures from outer space. I'm in their company right now. As I write to you of my fantastic mystery, I'm soaring with them high above you. (4, 10)

It is an escape, though, that only brings him back full force to the attention of the narrator, and one that invites emulation, as the opening poem suggests. By beginning at the end, what the novel seeks to show is everything that led up to and caused this disappearance. For Habiby, it is not the disappearance that is mysterious but the abnormal circumstances that caused it. As with Jabra's *Walid Masoud*, disappearance points to the intolerable existence that causes it. The tragedy of the individual divulges that of a whole society.

'Let's start at the beginning. My whole life has been strange, and a strange life can only end strangely' (6, 13).[18] What ensues is a litany of occurrences which emphasize Saeed's ordinariness as well as the specificity of his own personal and familial history. Saeed's life, it soon becomes apparent, is endlessly strained and challenged. Pushed, bullied, beaten, and threatened, what is a constant in his life is his lack of control over it. Outside forces shape it, and he feels hemmed in and confined. A son of a collaborator, who is shot during 'the events' (of 1948, presumably), he himself survives thanks to a donkey that takes the bullet: 'When I was born again, thanks to an ass' (6, 13). After escaping the 1948 war to Lebanon, he finds a way back to his homeland by 'infiltrating' back through the newly created borders of the Jewish state.[19] On his arrival to Haifa he is welcomed with 'welcome to medinat yisrael', and naively thinks that Haifa's name has been changed to the 'city of Israel', confusing the Hebrew word 'medinah', meaning state, with the Arabic word for city, 'madinah'. Most of his fellow countrymen are forced to take the opposite journey, out of Palestine. This is clearly dramatized in one of the most harrowing set of scenes in the novel: those describing the expulsions of the *nakba*. These are key moments in the novel's development. Both in being the cause of Saeed's trauma and his recourse to fantasy and in establishing his divergence from the typical national pattern of expulsion.

In the chapter titled 'How Saeed First Participated in the War of Independence' (14–16, 22–25), the reader is taken right into the heart of the *nakba*. As Saeed is being driven southwards from the new border towards Acre by the military governor, his father's military contact, and after being aggressively told by him to be silent, the jeep suddenly stops. The Jewish driver 'jumped from it like a shot, gun in hand. He raced into the sesame stalks, parting them with his paunch. I saw a peasant woman crouching down there, in her lap a child, his eyes wide in terror'. The encounter that ensues is worth quoting in full, because of its generative role in the novel and the stark historical facts it reveals:

"From which village?" demanded the governor.

> The mother remained crouching, staring at him askance, although he stood right over her, huge as a mountain.
>
> "From Berwah?" he yelled.

She made no response but continued to stare at him.

> He then pointed his gun straight at the child's head and screamed, "Reply, or I'll empty this into him!".
>
> At this I tensed, ready to spring at him come what may. After all, the blood of youth surged hot within me, at my age then of twenty-four. And not even a stone could have been unmoved at this sight. However, I recalled my father's final counsel and my mother's blessing and then said to myself, "I certainly shall attack him if he fires his gun. But so far he is merely threatening her." I remained at the ready.
>
> The woman did reply, "Yes, from Berwah."
>
> "Are you returning there?" he demanded.
>
> "Yes, returning."
>
> "Didn't we warn you," he yelled, "that anyone returning there will be killed? Don't you all understand the meaning of discipline? Do you think it's the same as chaos? Get up and run ahead of me. Go back anywhere you like to the east. And if I ever see you again on this road I'll show you no mercy."
>
> The woman stood up and, gripping her child by the hand, set off toward the east, not once looking back. Her child walked beside her, and he too never looked back.
>
> At this point I observed the first example of that amazing phenomenon that was to occur again and again until I finally met my friends from outer space. For the further the woman and child went from where we were, the governor standing and I in the jeep, the taller they grew. By the time they merged with their own shadows in the sinking sun they had become bigger than the plain of Acre itself. The governor still stood there awaiting their final disappearance, while I remained huddled in the jeep. Finally he asked in amazement, "Will they never disappear?"

The question, however, was not directed at me.

Berwah is the village of the poet [Mahmoud Darwish], who said fifteen years later:

I laud the executioner, victor over a dark-eyed maiden;
Hurrah for the vanquisher of villages, hurrah for the butcher of infants.

Was he this very child? Had he gone on walking eastward after releasing himself from his mother's hand, leaving her in the shadows? (15–16, 23–24)

Three issues need emphasizing: the position of the narrator in relation to the encounter between colonial official and dispossessed refugee; Palestinian history as refugee story; and literature as resistance to historical injury.

First, the protagonist's behaviour and position: it is cowardly, complicit, and contrary to the peasant's own displacement. She is being pushed out as he is making his way back in. He does nothing to help her, and remains silent as he witnesses her expulsion. This explains why 1948 is invoked in the title of the chapter by its Israeli designation as the 'War of Independence' and not by its Arab designation as the *nakba*. By being unable or refusing to act on the side of his own suffering people, Saeed acts on the side of their executioners. Habiby depicts him not as active participant but passive witness. Nearly forty years later, Habiby would confirm (in Karpel's documentary) that this incident did indeed take place, that he was the one riding next to the military governor, and that he did nothing to stop the expulsion: 'That too happened'. Why was Habiby so paralysed? 'Out of political responsibility', he reasoned. 'Bah' [*tuz*], he states in the documentary. A glaring sense of guilt is evident here, as is Habiby's denigration of his own political constraints as leading member of the communist party then: his 'responsibility'. Reviewing this history is key to appreciating the weight of this episode in the novel.

What Habiby describes is a strange turn of events for a communist party that had spent most its time since the Palestinian rebellion of 1936–9 'totally committed to the Arab national movement' and 'fully in support of the rebellion', even embracing a popular frontist coalition with Palestinian nationalists in the name of anti-imperialism (de-emphasizing class struggle and social revolution).[20] Indeed, national contradictions were so severe that they led to the party splitting up on national lines in 1943. Habiby and his Arab comrades formed the National Liberation League exactly because the party was 'unable to cope with and surmount the national antagonism of Arabs and Jews', between what Radwan al-Hilu (the Soviet-appointed secretary) called 'essentially a colonial and ruling nationality' and a national liberation struggle.[21] How, then, could

vehemently anti-imperialist Arab communists end up accepting the partition of a homeland they sought to liberate, keep unified, and share with Jews in Palestine? Musa Budeiri explains this stark development as follows: '[The National Liberation League's] belated recognition of partition resulted not only from the necessity of following the Soviet lead, but also from acceptance of an existing reality and a fait accompli, which it realized the Arabs were incapable of overturning'. Habiby himself, in Karpel's documentary, emphasized Soviet pressure as the main reason for accepting the partition decision of 1947 (and he experienced first-hand how traitorous to the Arab national cause this was perceived when two Arab soldiers barged into his house in Ramallah wanting to kill him). Since all the Arab communist parties (acting as Soviet foreign-policy satellites) were forced to accept this Soviet position, the communist cause did suffer in the Arab world as a result for years to come (until Soviet *rapprochement* with Arab nationalism in the late 1950s), and became indelibly tainted with outside interference or, worse, ideological complicity with Jewish statehood.[22]

As if subservience to Soviet foreign policy objectives was not enough, 1948 intensified Arab–Jewish national contradictions and had lasting consequences. As Arab communists mobilized to protect Palestinians from the engulfing catastrophe, prominent Jewish communist leaders (like Mikunis) actively supported the Haganah forces and helped them in procuring arms from the Communist Eastern bloc, tipping the war in their favour. Another prominent Jewish communist leader, Meir Vilner, signed the Israeli declaration of independence on behalf of the CP even as the expulsions of Palestinians were taking place around him.[23] From Soviet support for Arab national liberation to sanctifying Jewish colonial and war aims in Palestine: what must Palestinian communists have thought and felt about this catastrophic and opportunist change of policy? Or later, when after the *nakba* they were forced back under the organizational and political hegemony of those who supported Zionist objectives during the *nakba*? Under Soviet orders and in order to maintain a semblance of internationalism alive (however distorted), Arab communists compromised ideologically and adapted to a reality they could not change. Habiby's sense of guilt and responsibility can only be understood in this context of national collapse and overpowering socio-political disintegration. The episode above from *The Pessoptimist* registers Habiby's feelings well; the scars and injuries of 1947–8 would mark him till the end.

There was one major positive outcome of long-term consequence for 48 Palestinians, however. Because of their political and organizational experience, and despite their subservient reintegration into a reunited

communist party after 1948, Arab communists (who remained or found their way back) were well positioned to struggle against Israel's emerging military government, which lasted until 1966. Communists were at the forefront of political challenge to the state, and demanded from day one full rights and equality for Palestinians in Israel. They also played a key role in exposing state crimes, publicly uncovering the Kafr Qasim massacre, for example, in which Israeli border guards killed forty-nine Palestinian villagers in cold blood as they were returning from their fields in the evening, unaware of the curfew put in place earlier that day, as a result of Israel's participation in the tripartite attack on Egypt in October 1956.[24]

Does this sound like collaboration, a charge levelled against communists intermittently by nationalists? To believe that is not only to misconstrue and falsify the party's overall contribution to Palestinian society in Israel but to ignore how active the CP itself was in fighting against Israel's regime of collaboration, surveillance, and control. Adaptation to circumstances one cannot change is quite distinct from active collaboration with an occupying regime.[25] Hillel Cohen, who studied collaboration in both the mandate and the Israel periods, depicts the role and place of the CP in Israel as follows:

> The Communists organized mass demonstrations, urged internal refugees to return to their villages without permits, and conducted other protest activities – some under the banner of Jewish–Arab partnership. The Israeli establishment thus viewed them as a clear and present danger to the state. The Communists also attacked collaborators vociferously and constantly tried to shame them publicly, coining terms like "the government's tails," which quickly became very popular. Indeed, if in the confusing circumstances that followed the 1948 war many Arabs chose to collaborate, the Communists offered a nationalist alternative, although a complex one that recognized Jewish national aspirations, and the right of Israel to exist within restricted borders.[26]

What Cohen shows is that the CP did fortify Palestinian national identity and did forge a strong opposition to unjust and discriminatory state policies, including land expropriation. They were, in fact, barely tolerated by the state: constantly hounded, spied on, and politically restricted. Habiby wrote the *Pessoptimist* in this context of struggle, forced compromise, and flawed (because unequal) internationalism, battling against Israel's military regime even as Arab nationalists were accusing him of complicity.[27]

If such political considerations and strains haunted Habiby, one particular fact is key to understanding the episode above: Saeed is no communist adapting to the new reality of colonial Israel, but a straight out

collaborator who comes from a family of collaborators. In one sense, Habiby's judgement in the novel seems much harsher, showing how Saeed saves his own skin while people around him suffer banishment and exile. In another sense, however, it is deceptive, as it tars ordinary Palestinians who remained with the brush of collaboration when the actual historical event was about Habiby's own failing and his own political 'responsibility'. Both senses are strong and irrepressible, and Habiby does actually come to see himself as weak and ordinary, burdened by the weight of an over-bearing *nakba*. If anything, it is human weakness that would preoccupy Habiby in his later fiction. Whichever sense ultimately predominates in the novel, one thing is clear: 1948 produces a deep sense of human failure in Habiby, both for being unable to prevent it and for the circumstances surrounding his own partial protection from it.

Second, Saeed's description is a form of resistance to a deeply traumatizing event. As refugee mother and child leave and head eastwards, their figures slowly tower over, becoming bigger than the landscape around them. If expulsion eliminates physical presence, it does so only by enhancing its figurative and symbolic dimensions. Shadows continue to hover over an emptied land until they can return. The link is never severed, and neither is it cut in Saeed's mind. Refugee presence will only grow in his consciousness, haunting and shadowing his every move. This is Habiby's way of minimising *qatīʻa*. And of showing the centrality of 1948 in Palestinian history. Will refugees also haunt the Israeli military governor, who in his impatient question raises doubts about whether they will ever disappear? Will the repressed surface again for him as well? There's no suggestion in the novel that the perpetrators of the *nakba* feel any remorse or compassion for their victims.

Third, 1948 generates a literary response. Here as well the symbolic becomes a form of resistance. By asking whether the child in the encounter is Mahmoud Darwish, Habiby draws a direct link between expulsion and poetry. If the act of expulsion silenced Saeed, it didn't silence the child. A new generation will fight with words, and resist their executioners. Israel's historical crimes of 'erasure' (of expulsion and prevention of return) will be exposed by moral and cultural challenge.[28] Its crimes will be written and spoken, motivating alternatives and oppositions. This is Kanafani's generation of resistance poets, who forge a culture against oppression and national negation. Their significance lies in keeping the cause of the dispossessed alive during a time of national loss and despair, and before the construction of diasporic resistance movement, as well as in formulating strategies and techniques of conscious challenge

under conditions of cultural and political siege and disconnect from the Arab world.

The return of the child in Habiby's episode above is the emergence of a whole generation of resisters un-conformed to Israel's ongoing conquest. As Mahmoud Darwish's *Journal of an Ordinary Grief* (his reflection in prose on the nature of 48 Palestinians) shows, it is also a generation that challenged Israel's self-identity as a victim state by exposing the fundamental contradiction and deep hypocrisy of resolving one refugee problem by creating another: 'These are refugees that bring an end to the state of being refugees by creating other refugees.' What Habiby is invoking by linking 1948 to Darwish is exactly this gesture of challenge, and Darwish's distinctive universal mode of resolving it:

> No matter the degree of enmity between Arabs and Israelis, no Arab has the right to feel that his enemy's enemy is his friend, because Nazism is the enemy of all peoples … But Israeli excess in taking out their hatred on another people is something else, because one crime cannot redeem another. That Palestinians and other Arabs should be asked to pay the price for crimes they did not commit cannot possibly serve as an indemnity for the disaster.[29]

Remembering 1948 and inserting it in the broader context of human suffering and dispossession is meant to create the space for future mutuality and equality. Like Kanafani in *Returning to Haifa*, Darwish too explains to an Israeli who has taken over a Palestinian refugee's house that:

> When you find yourself cancelling me out of my being, and when I insist on keeping it, the relationship between you and me becomes one of conflict. Not because I object to your being or to the possibility of a shared existence, but because I object to the negation of my being that arises from the way you carry on with yours.

The road there, as Habiby shows in *The Pessoptimist*, runs through 1948: historical memory, self-knowledge, cultural resistance.

In typical Saeedian style, though, and after relaying the 1948 episode, Saeed goes on to trivialize and banalize it. But its significance both for him and in the novel cannot be overestimated. It is not only on the level of theme that it affects Saeed, denting his consciousness, but it is also on the level of plot. Even as he is relaying the events of 1948, he mentions 'creatures from outer space'. The first time he actually 'meets' those creatures is after another encounter with refugees; this time in Acre's Jazar Mosque. There he is surrounded by an eruption of voices and questions (how did you cross? whom did you see? were there other survivors? etc.), and is hammered by endless names of razed villages: Manshiya, Berwah, Ruwais, al-Hadatha, al-Damun,

al-Zeeb, al-Kabri, Suhmata, Kufr ‘Inan, and many more. Here again he is saved while others disappear, only to be replaced, as his former history teacher suggests, by Palestine’s new invaders. ‘I asked them [the refugees] why [they are leaving] and they replied: “We don’t have an Adon Safsarsheck [his father’s military contact]. Those who razed our villages are not going to take us back there”’ (26; 39). Saeed again tries to trivialize 1948. After witnessing his countrymen’s ongoing disaster he says ‘I felt quite relaxed, free from all worry.’ (26; 39). As ‘the rest of my nation was out there wandering aimlessly’ (27; 40), he recognizes his ‘own good fortune’ and exceptionality and feels content. But the impact of 1948 is unmistakable. Persistent injury and denial are expressed in fantasy: ‘For it was that night, as the false dawn broke, that I saw the signal from outer space’ (26; 39).

The repressed thus returns as imagination. More: a self-construction is reified into an external being with the power of salvation. The creatures that Saeed conjures up have the capacity to save him from his degraded condition. That night in Acre the Saviour tells him:

> This is the way you always are. When you can no longer endure your misery, yet you cannot bear to pay the high price you know is needed to change it, you come to me for help. But I see what other people do and the price they pay, allowing no one to squeeze them into one of these tunnels, and then I become furious with you. What is it you lack? Is any one of you lacking a life he can offer, or lacking a death to make him fear for his life? (39; 57–58)

These are harsh reprimands. Saeed is told that self-sacrifice is the way forward: others have done it and succeeded; why can’t he? Habiby shies away from the creature’s harsh criticism, and from blaming the victims for their weakness and their urge to fantasy. *The Pessoptmist* is in fact a celebration of the imaginative imperative not a rejection of it. What the novel tries to establish through Saeed’s journey is a distinction between a self-negating imagination, exemplified here, and a self-affirming one exemplified by Saeed’s writing of his own account. Yet the novel rejects neither. For Habiby, one is never completely defeated or dehumanized so long as the will to imagination exists. Fiction becomes the colonized’s remaining means of slipping out of her oppressor’s constraints and restrictions. As Saeed jestingly says in a chapter on the ‘many virtues of the Oriental imagination’: ‘And had it not been for their “Oriental imagination,” would those Arabs of yours, my dear sir, have been able to live one single day in this country?’ (100; 138).

Crucially, the clash between such cultural resistance and a more confrontational, self-sacrificing type of resistance is powerfully staged by Habiby in the novel, both emphasizing and criticizing Saeed’s preferred

survivalist option at the same time. This comes after the return of his first love Yu'ād [returns], her violent expulsion, and his marriage to his second wife Baqiya [the one who remained]. He has a son with Baqiya whom they name Walā' [loyalty]. Shocked by his parents' silent and silence-inducing life, Walā' rebels one day.[30] As he's surrounded by police under Tantura beach (a depopulated and destroyed 1948 village, and site of a massacre), his exchange with Baqiya (brought there with Saeed to convince him to surrender), and her consequent decision to join him and his fellow vanguard revolutionaries, is beautifully and sadly evoked by Habiby.[31] By the end, Saeed is again left behind, alone. I quote a sample of their historically illuminating exchange, which conveys the severe political constraints Palestinians experienced under Israeli rule:

> 'I'm not hiding, mother. I've taken up arms only because I got sick and tired of your hiding'…
>
> 'Suffocated? It was to breathe free that I came to this cellar, to breathe in freedom just once. In my cradle you stifled my crying. As I grew and tried to learn how to talk from what you said, I heard only whispers'.
>
> 'As I went to school you warned me, "Careful what you say!". When I told you my teacher was my friend, you whispered, "He may be spying on you"'…
>
> 'One morning you told me, mother, "You talk in your sleep; careful what you say in your sleep!"'…
>
> His mother cried out: 'A way out? How? Death is no way out, merely an end. There's no shame in how we live. If we are secretive, it's only in hope of deliverance. If we're "careful", it's only to protect all of you. Where's the shame in you coming out to us, Walā', to your father and mother? Alone you have power over nothing.' (109–110; 150–152)

If the time for collective self-regeneration hasn't come yet, then Walā's vanguardist armed struggle will always have its advocates. Habiby is not tempted by it, though; however attractive its lure in the mid 1960s onwards.[32] Unlike Jabra, that kind of self-sacrifice never appealed to Habiby (nor to Khalifeh). For the occupied, armed struggle against a militarily vastly superior state seemed futile and self-destructive. Time, Baqiya argues, may yet bring collective change. In the meantime ('until they are ready'), Habiby leaves Saeed open to accusations of submission and subservience. And silence:

> 'Then why doesn't he speak?' [Walā' asks]
>
> 'He's not very good with words.' [Baqiya replies].

Words are key in Habiby's vision of resistance and emancipation. If anything, *The Pessoptimist* is Saeed's way of showing how good Saeed is with

words: speaking about his injuries and wounds, and about his weakness and powerlessness. It is only through his sense of historical consciousness and his recognition of self-capacity that all round transformation is possible.[33]

The fact that none of the options currently on offer promise this possibility is clear in the novel. Even submission is not an option. When Saeed raises the white flag in Haifa during the 1967 war, it lands him in prison, where he is beaten and tortured. If all Saeed was doing was following the orders given on the radio, but clearly intended for the newly occupied Palestinian residents the West Bank and Gaza, his complete subservience to Israel is read by the authorities as a subversive act that suggests that Haifa itself is occupied land.[34] Kneeling just in case his masters require it thus flips into an unintended act of resistance. Here again, as with the Israeli officer in the 1948 episode earlier, Habiby depicts Israeli characters as lacking remorse and compassion. Jacob, Saeed's handler, is another state functionary. His Mizrahiness (Arab Jewishness) allows for one moment of sympathy for Saeed, when he 'was unable to stop the tears pouring down his cheeks or my raving' (121; 157). But that's only symbolic and has absolutely no impact on how Saeed is treated. Jacob is a mere mouthpiece for the state's neurotic suspicion and oppressive narcissism, as he tells Saeed: 'We don't punish you for what crosses your minds but for what crosses the big man's mind. He considers the white flag you raised over your house in Haifa to be proof that you are engaged in a combat against the state and that you do not recognize it' (122; 157–158). Why does Habiby, a leader in a bi-national communist party whose daily life is filled with encounters and discussions and friendships with Israeli Jews, never depict ordinary Israelis in his novel, as both Kanafani and Darwish do?[35] Where is, simply put, Habiby's literary Rita (Darwish's young Israeli lover in one of his most famous poems 'Rita and the Rifle')?[36] It is hard to answer this question with any certainty. Habiby was a disciplined political being, and his onerous public life of representing an oppressed and suffering population mattered most to him. So he couldn't afford Darwish's liberties. He also had a particular way of thinking about his own imaginative work in relation to his political commitments. Politics and literature were, he would famously reiterate in his journalism, the two 'watermelons' he carried: two burdens, but also two different and separate entities and activities.[37] Literature was his freedom from political constraint, his personal truth ('Literature doesn't lie', he states in Karpel's documentary). If his political world was suffused with Israelis, he wanted his literary world to speak to his *nakba* pain and injury. As a 'form of crying', writing was a

way to revisit his scars and wounds, and to remember who inflicted them. To expect everyday encounters with Israelis to rectify or attenuate this is to misconstrue the ongoing nature of the 'radical injustice' of Palestinian exile and dispossession.[38]

This also speaks to the novel's overall sense of political helplessness. In a world where vanguardism means joining armed resistance outside Palestine, submission is deemed subversion, and collaboration leads nowhere, Saeed is left with few options. What else can he do but sit on a stake and await his redeemers. This is the grand finale of the novel: 'Yes, there I was again, sitting cross-legged and alone on top of that blunt stake' (155; 219). Looking down, his whole life passes by under him: two Yu'āds (a repetition of ever returning refugees representing exile), one Baqiya, his security handler Jacob and his boss big man, etc. None manage to tempt him to come down. Even the communists (whom he spies on and hands over to the Israeli authorities), epitomized by the newspaper boy who tells him 'Those who don't sit on it must come down into the streets, with us. There's no third choice', (158; 220–221), are rejected as an option. Patient communist organizing and mobilizing is not Saeed's way. Until, finally, The Saviour lifts him up and takes him towards his fantastical escape, ending his family inherited pessoptimism and resolving his own contradictory existence in the realm of fantasy.

Is the ending escapist, defeatist? Neither. It contains a fundamental plea for truth, articulated in the title of the epilogue: 'For the Sake of Truth and History'. Rather than disclosing what those are, however, Habiby thickens the mystery by suggesting that the letters the narrator was sent came from a mental hospital in Acre. Yet their source is never found, and the ending leaves everything unresolved: 'The point is, gentlemen, how will you ever find him unless you happen to trip right over him?' (163; 226). Or does it? What the ending implies is the futility of searching for the real identity of Saeed, its irrelevancy. Saeed could be anyone and anywhere. It is this generalizing gesture that Habiby seeks. He eggs the reader on not to search for Saeed but to emulate his path: to write her way out of negation, oppression, and silence. To speak and to rediscover the power of historical self-awareness and self-capacity. Voice is, indeed, what the novel seeks to enact. *Literary* voice, more specifically. Through it, agency is rediscovered, and participation in the determination of future history becomes a possibility. A politics around collective self-writing needs to be formulated, where truth and history are neither compromised nor suppressed. Habiby's self-critical novel clearly suggests that this is now essential. A community of self-liberating agents is still to be had. Literature

does not only anticipate it, but posits its core organizing value as politics: self-writing as self-determination. As Akram F. Khater put it, 'To know, for Habiby, is an act of self-liberation and conquering of fears.'[39]

There's no sense of inwardness or alienation at the end. Allegory and fable only bring us back to self-searching political realism and historical boundedness. Habiby recognizes that real problems can neither be evaded nor mystified, but should only be confronted and challenged. If anything, *The Pessoptimist* is a democratic invitation to popular action. It speaks to the same people that Habiby hopes would act, addressing them directly. There's no sense, as Jameson argues about Ousmane in his essay on third-world literature, that the agent is still in the making, or not yet found. If Saeed the pessoptimist writes his way out of disappearance, then so can Palestine's other remnants. The future is, as a result, pregnant with possibility. The novel remains open to the living forces of change and transformation in the present: popular acts will one day redeem the oppressed masses. Anticipation and openness to the future are key. If for Lukacs' classical realist writers, the historical novel portrays bourgeois revolutionary ascendance, for Habiby it is the ascendance of the Palestinian anti-colonial movement that is significant. This explains the tempo and verve of the narrative. It is a Candidian journey in fact, as Habiby himself suggests in the novel. The worst of all possible worlds happens (contrary to Panglossian optimism), and Saeed, like Candide, pushes along and survives, never ceasing to believe in the possibilities of historical redemption or salvation. Habiby doesn't ablate history like Voltaire does, nor does he miss out on reflecting on its tragic consequences.[40] Downfall and historical turning points feed his narrative. What he does share with Voltaire, however, is a sense of ascendance and forward movement. For Habiby, this sense is provided by the rising tide of 'people's struggles for liberation', and its growing Arab and Palestinian form. It is not the political rise of the bourgeoisie which inspires his artistic writing, but the rise of the popular-national liberation struggles. His weekly column in the communist *Al-Ittihad* testifies to that, egging people against fear, fragmentation, and pessimism and towards unity and struggle. One early example will suffice titled 'An Honest Word' (5 September 1959):

> I rest assured that this remnant is a noble branch of the tree of the Palestinian Arab people which, through the blood of its martyrs, has sustained the flame of national liberation throughout the Arab east for the last thirty years. Our hearts burn with enthusiasm from the songs of liberation and victory over imperialism which play frequently across radio channels

> in the Arab worlds. But we don't learn our nationalism from anyone. Our people's past struggles, its steadfast fight here, are the sweetest song. So don't distrust our people dear friends, but fight for it.[41]

The Pessoptimist is Habiby's artistic injunction to act for freedom. A song of struggle and hope.

CHAPTER 4

Sahar Khalifeh: radical questions and revolutionary feminism

No Palestinian writer has subjected Palestinian society to as radical a political and social critique as Khalifeh has done since she began writing in the early 1970s. Unlike Jabra and Habiby, 1948 was not her generation's constitutive experience. It was the 1967 defeat and occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Though Palestinians and Arabs of all generations were deeply impacted by 1967, it was *the* main event in the lives of a new generation born after the *nakba*. Seen both as a defeat of Arab nationalism and as symptom of Arab weakness, 1967 became a cause for further Arab radicalization. As Khalifeh herself put it in 2002: 'Our defeat in 1967 was the third tragedy to take place during my marriage. I discovered that our political defeat was a result of our cultural defeat. I could see very clearly that the debacle of 1967 was the fruit of a rotten tree that needed a cure – the internally defeated do not triumph.'[1] In order to reverse Arab defeats and achieve collective self-determination and individual self-realization, social values and power structures needed to be reformulated. Both women's oppression and class exploitation had to end. Palestinian society thus had to be turned inside out for it to be capable of freeing itself from conquest and foreign yoke. This is the radical kernel of Khalifeh's project. The three working assumptions that inform her worldview and aesthetic choices can be summarized as follows: external impositions are signs of internal weakness; no internally oppressive society can ever be free; for popular participatory insurgent energies to be released, progressive social demands should be met. As Muhammad Siddiq argues: 'What deserves noting from the outset … are the two dominant emotions that motivate and govern this fiction: steadfast defiance in the face oppression, and an ardent desire for deliverance from the political, cultural, and physical constraints that circumscribe Palestinian existence.'[2]

My aim is to delineate Khalifeh's specific conception of liberation and demonstrate how strongly it is connected with a realist aesthetic. I begin with her first exploratory feminist *We are No Longer Your Slaves* (1974).

I then chart her development of a distinct socially panoramic aesthetic from the late 1970s with working-class, *Wild Thorns*, (1976) and socialist feminist *Sunflower* (1980), where feminist challenge meets grassroots mass revolt. I return to Khalifeh at the end of the next chapter in order to convey the impact of the *intifada* and its defeat on her work, and consider *Gate of the Courtyard* (1990). Participation in collective struggle is conditioned on individual recognition and on self-realization as possibility, and a powerful feminist critique of nationalism is voiced. Before examining her founding realist novels, I would first like to contextualize her work in relation to the trajectory of novel and politics that I have been developing and map out her distinct conception of liberation.

What's unique about Khalifeh's literary trajectory is that it is one which is most determined by the specific dialectic of Israel's occupation and Palestinian response and resistance to it. The political temporality of the occupied is thus distinct from that of the Palestinian diaspora in the Arab world. Lack of synchronicity reflects uneven conditions of development, even as political and intellectual influences cross breed (as with Kanafani's discovery of 'resistance poetry'). Disjuncture, despite the unifying pulls of politics and identity, is a permanent feature of Palestinian reality since the *nakba*. In the Palestinian experience of dispossession and occupation, Khalifeh's trajectory is that of the dispossessed-occupied, especially in the West Bank where most of her novels are set. If Jabra's work reflects exilic immersion in an authoritarian Arab environment, Khalifeh writes about oppression and on-going dispossession by the Israeli occupier. If Jabra's modernist crisis arises from the late 1970s onwards, the emergence of tonalities of inwardness, atomization, and decomposition of anti-colonial politics in Khalifeh's foundational 'panoramic realism' (more below) comes on the heels of the failure of the first *intifada* and Oslo. Exilic disintegration in Jabra's *The Other Rooms* of the 1980s is the defeat and capitulation of Oslo in Khalifeh's *The Inheritance* of the 1990s. The fact that the *intifada* takes place in the late 1980s – five years after the fall of Beirut and the destruction of the Palestinian national movement and ten years after the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War and the close of the Arab revolutionary conjuncture – is thus telling. It is as if Palestinian diasporic defeat catches up with occupied Palestinians. Their mass rebellion comes as the Arab world is mired in wars (the Lebanese Civil War and the Iran–IraqWar) and political apathy: languishing in cynicism, fragmentation, and the distorted consolations of an emergent religious fundamentalism.

What this brief overview suggests is that it is through the politics and praxis of the occupied that the rise and fall of Arab-wide and Palestinian

revolution get mediated. Like the 1948 conquest for Habiby, the 1967 occupation is definitional for Khalifeh. Political capture and confinement by Israel is constitutive and intrinsic, and sets the ground for the anti-colonial struggle itself. Because captured and controlled by a militarily overwhelming enemy, both Habiby (as internally colonized) and Khalifeh (as occupied) conceive of struggle in non-violent cultural and political ways: if Habiby opts for aesthetic self-authoring, Khalifeh develops an anti-colonial socialist feminism. If guerrilla armed struggle marked the moment of Palestinian resistance and revolutionary challenge in the diaspora, popular revolt is what the occupied opted for (especially after the failure of armed resistance in the West Bank immediately after 1967 and in Gaza by 1971). This explains so much about Khalifeh's own grass-roots vantage point in her novels and her fundamental rejection of PLO armed struggle in the occupied territories as means of liberation. The first *intifada* epitomizes this strategy, an event accurately described by Edward Said described as 'one of the most extraordinary anti-colonial and unarmed mass insurrections in the whole history of the modern period.'[3] As Mona N. Younis has argued: 'By expanding channels for popular political participation, the mass-based organizations in place since the late 1970s made the *intifada* possible.'[4] Participatory self-organization is the horizon of Khalifeh's fiction. Strikes and demonstrations in the 1970s and 1980s anticipate mass revolt in her fiction, even as she comes to convey its limits and mourn its ultimate failure. *Wild Thorns* and *Sunflower* define such deep plebeian, democratizing, and anti-feudal attitudes. Perhaps her interest in revolt explains why Khalifeh returns to the Palestinian revolt of 1936–9 in her most recent, historical novel *Of Noble Origins* (2009). When the present lacks enough mobilizational zeal for Khalifeh's realist emancipatory desire, then the Palestinian past is always an option. As I argue about Elias Khoury's *Gate of the Sun* (1998) in my epilogue, Oslo does in fact produce a form of historical nostalgia, a remembrance of past revolutionary possibility in the anti-mobilizational present.

What concerns me in this chapter is to show how deeply invested Khalifeh is in the connection between social and political emancipation and aesthetic realism. If her novels have one unified theme, it is the changing fortunes of liberation in occupied Palestinian society. Indeed, throughout various historical shifts, Khalifeh's revolutionary commitments have remained constant. In the most exhaustive interview she ever gave (in English in 1979), she formulates her 'basic beliefs'. They are key to understanding her literary project and worldview. The

contours of her radicalism and its distinct vantage point on Palestinian society are elaborated here. As a universalist in the tradition of Fanon's anti-colonial socialism, Khalifeh understood that the end of national oppression is a necessary but insufficient condition for liberation. Collective freedom is the condition for individual self-emancipation, which is the actual end point of struggle.[5] As she explains, liberation is all round, and from all aspects of social and political oppression: 'It's the liberation from all aspects of exploitation which has befallen man.' Both gender and class equalities are crucial here. In Khalifeh's radical feminism, the liberation of women is part and parcel of the liberation humankind:

> If you come from these basic beliefs – that all human beings should have the same opportunity of having an enjoyable life, a real life, a human life, and you believe that class should not be a barrier between the people and nationalism should not be a barrier and you believe that the Arab should have the same opportunities just like the Israeli and the Israeli the same opportunity as the Arab, you believe in the equality of the human race in general. If you want to deny this belief in the Israeli then you are not trying to find a *human* solution.[6]

Human equality is a core value. It is also the best solution to existing injury and deprivation. Her novels are conceived as *histories of social and political oppression*, capturing Israeli domination, Palestinian processes of resistance and potential transformation, as well as, distinctly, possibilities for Palestinian–Israeli cooperation and solidarity. Indeed, of the four writers I focus on in this study, Khalifeh is the only one where ordinary Israeli characters are a recurring presence. Khalifeh sees Israelis not only as dispossessing enemies but as potential partners in anti-colonial cooperative struggle. They too play a significant role in her vision of emancipation and her aesthetic practice.

How, then, to capture this Israeli–Palestinian dialectic of repression and freedom in aesthetic form? What's the most adequate mode for capturing political challenge? For Khalifeh, it's a broad realist canvas of interconnected individuals woven together as part of a panoramic social and historical view. As she explains, realism is both aesthetic and epistemological for her, both a way of representing reality in fiction and a way of knowing it in fact. It is as if she makes the category mistake that Terry Eagleton warns against with Lukács when he says that: 'Lukács seems for the most part merely to assume that a correct epistemology and ontology will produce significant art.'[7] If Khalifeh risks wedding or reducing aesthetic value

to a form of representation too closely, then (for her) it is a risk worth taking because it allows her to convey Palestine's twentieth-century predicament. It is also a mark of her deep realist commitments:

> By panorama we establish the connections between individuals, on the one hand, and their realities, on the other. Is there an individual with no reality? This is our reality: a reality of humiliation, of captivity, of rebellion; a reality of a people longing for liberation without finding it; a reality of people who try time and again, and each time they pay with their blood and youth as the price for the revolution – which, because it is rotting from the inside, scatters their dreams, slows down the pulse of the street, and invites death to prevail. The people wake up and go on dreaming again until they storm out of the prison cells and into the light.[8]

Palestinian history, panoramically told, is a story of endless repression and ever renewing resources of resistance and struggle. Palestinian existence is impossible without resistance, and tragedy lies in mobilizations that end in defeat. Khalifeh's protagonists nearly always live through such experiences. Constricted by their occupiers and weakened by their own society's conservatism, they come to grapple with a historically over-determined reality. Khalifeh finds the following questions aesthetically most compelling: what happens to individuals under such severe conditions of domination and negation; will the cycle of recurring defeat and struggle ever end; and does human yearning for freedom and self-realization ever get extinguished? If there are moments when Khalifeh's authorial voice trumps or over-powers her own characters' self-conceptions and internal modes of development, then these stand as a strong reminders that her literary realism is itself motivated by fundamental emancipatory questions which require real-world solutions.

We are No Longer Your Slaves (1974)

Khalifeh's first published novel has a familiar enough theme in Arab and postcolonial fiction. It charts the existential anxieties and personal relationships of a small group of urban artists and intellectuals.[9] What is worth emphasizing from the beginning is the novel's radical thrust: it stages many of the problems of un-freedom and alienation that would preoccupy Khalifeh for years to come. *We are No Longer Your Slaves* is, in fact, Palestine's first feminist novel. Social and political problems are presented from the vantage point of women, whose voice and perspective is crucial for novelistic development.[10] A strong consciousness of class inequality is also present here, putting pressure on the whole structure of

novel. Though not as developed as in *Wild Thorns*, class is discussed and marked out as the most relevant category for understanding society – even if it is not yet a core part of the narrative thrust and tone of Khalifeh's aesthetic. The fact that intellectuals rather than workers and dispossessed refugees predominate here explains Khalifeh's own later critical comments about her early 'existentialist phase' and dissatisfaction with 'individualist solutions', and about her preference for 'communal awareness and … communal loyalty'.[11] Personal relationships in *We are No Longer* are still divorced from surrounding society: her intellectuals are atomized, isolated, and lonely. Not yet the concrete social situated-ness of *Wild Thorns*, and its panoramic realism. If a deep sense of political repression and social stagnation hangs over the narrative, it is ruptured by discussions about art, various intellectual controversies, and failed or fleeting love affairs.

Love is at the core of the novel's preoccupations. The main entanglement is between Samia (bookshop owner) and 'Abd al-Rahman ('artist of the poor'). Its defining event is her abandonment of 'Abd al-Rahman and departure to America during his seven-year stint in political prison. This haunts the present and is repeated again at the end of the novel. For Khalifeh, Samia emblematizes the problems of diaspora and disengagement. Her inability to wait for 'Abd al-Rahman registers a distinct position in the novel, and contrasts with notions of self-sacrifice or romantic love. Love nearly always ends in tragedy in *We are No Longer*, being simultaneously all-consuming and unsatisfying. The only exception is young Samira's relationships with a reimprisoned 'Abd al-Rahman gestured towards at the end of novel. Their union represents a distinct combination. It symbolizes Khalifeh's productive combination of the intellectual and the masses, art and politics, ideas and practice. Experience comes to finally converge with class consciousness. If Samira is concrete, active, and rooted, 'Abd al-Rahman is a worn out committed artist, overburdened by the suffering of humanity but still hopeful. It is not that Samira is not intellectual, just that her refugee background and her conception of change mark her out as what Khalifeh regards here as an effective radical. Neither disillusioned nor an individualist, Samira attempts to establish a connection with her surrounding society in order to transform it. Her revolutionism is clearly expressed when she says: 'Wake up, this generation doesn't belong to your opulent class anymore, nor to your velvety hands. It belongs to us, the poor, the workers, and the productive toilers. Wake up before it is too late … Patience and effort are the contentment of the revolutionaries.'[12] When, in a group discussion about how to overcome social ignorance and economic backwardness, the issue of whether

to allow working-class members to join the group's newly created cultural club arises, Samira's position is clear: openness and engagement with society rather than class privilege and discrimination. She declares: 'this is the age of socialism not the age of monopoly' (64). Arrogant Oxford-educated Farouk thinks otherwise: 'The presence of people who don't belong to our class will be like a dissonant note in an otherwise perfect musical piece!' (64). Samira rejects this, and the structure of sympathies in the novel works to her advantage.

Her vision of freedom, though, is not without its limits and weaknesses. If all culture is 'from the people and to the people; derived civilization to an upcoming one' (65), then the people as active political agent are absent. Intellectuals are the catalysts of change: 'Intellectuals shouldn't dwell in their ivory towers, away from the people and its miseries. They should come down from their lofty heights and merge in the different sectors, different environments, in all the healthy and unhealthy milieus, so that the connection is strong between leader and soldier, planner and executer, guide and guided' (64). By conceiving of change in those terms, Samira replicates the exact same social divisions and hierarchies she is trying to overcome. Unlike *Wild Thorns* later on, leaders here are not yet transformed by reciprocal interaction with society, and existing class divisions are merely transposed onto the political realm. The novel's political vanguardism sounds elitist: intellectuals bring ready-made ideas to the masses for them to execute. It is not that Khalifeh's conception of the problems of the intellectual and the masses is not a *political* advance on Jabra's essentially cultural trope. Khalifeh does see the need to connect with the masses politically, not just redeem them messianically. The problem lies in the fact that judged as a political project, it is internally contradictory. It's worth remembering that Jabra never made claims to working out a political strategy in his novels. Khalifeh's distinct sense of the novel as social and political history actively stages those problems. Because she comes to resolve them differently and more radically in the future, the limits of her vision are here clear to see. Khalifeh's subsequent achievement is that she manages to collapse such a rigid binary between intellectuals and masses. In its place, she posits popular self-organization as desired value. That becomes the hallmark of her aesthetic. In *We are No Longer*, though, this option is still unavailable.

The novel remains intellectualist, and is ideologically unable to cut itself off from the social divisions and inequalities it clearly despises. This explains Khalifeh's later political dissatisfaction with *We are No Longer*. Unlike her subsequent novels, Khalifeh ends here on an idealist note. As 'Abd al-Rahman tells Samira, what can a bird do in prison but sing?

And sing of their suffering they do together at the end. Though Samira's rootedness and reasonableness are again emphasized (and contrasted with other characters' romantic failings and illusions), she is unable to utilize them in her quest for a free society. Vulnerabilities and weaknesses are voiced, as the image of lovers as prison birds brings the novel to a close.

What does that tell us about women in the novel? That they play a key role in Khalifeh's first novel, and that their presence as partners in the struggle for freedom is crucial. Artist Suha exemplifies this in the novel. Khalifeh depicts her as a free and independent. But, importantly, not a model to emulate. Suha's ideas about freedom and artistic self-expression are, in fact, actively challenged in the novel. That too distinguishes Khalifeh's intellectual novel from Jabra. Art is not a pathway for freedom. If Suha's struggle out of poverty into art and cultural prominence is compelling, what she ends up with is not: anger, pain, and sadness. Her solitude is never overcome because love is nearly always out of reach for her, or never enough when it happens. Art, too, is never substantial enough. Its 'beauty wholeness and justice' is always momentary, fleeting (110). In her discussion about art and society with 'Abd al-Rahman, Suha sums up her position as follows:

> But where can I find the solution? How shall I find it? You say that love is the solution, and I say that it isn't. You say that art is the means and the message, and I say that art is the aim. You aspire for collective happiness, and I only care about myself. So how shall I search for a solution with you? And I don't even trust you? (113)

In contrast to his route of artistic commitment and art as means to collective salvation, Suha sees it as refuge and momentary solace from loneliness and alienation. No salvation here, just temporary escape from the harsh reality of oppression and injury, which can never change in any case. For Khalifeh, Suha's position is an individualist deadend: both a failure to act in society and a subjectivist conception of artistic production. Unlike Jabra, the artist is too self-entangled for Khalifeh to soar above individual constrains. Since Khalifeh rejects a Jabra-like messianic realism, she has to work through the problems of political change and transformation differently.

It is clear from this that what Khalifeh has not yet articulated at this point in her writing is a feminist conception of society where women's self-expression is premised on social equality. This vision is absent in *We are No Longer* and will only come later in *Sunflower*. *We are No Longer* prepares the ground for it. But it's only in *Sunflower* that a well-developed

feminist consciousness blasts its way into the text. This could be a function of Khalifeh's own radicalization as a writer. But could also be because of novelistic setting: the West Bank in 1964–5. This is Khalifeh's way of saying that problems of social and political freedom (and political prison) pre-date the Israeli occupation, and that freedom is an issue because of the oppressive nature of the Arab regimes, not out of nationalist struggle against Israel. This is where the strength of *We are No Longer Your Slaves* lies: in identifying oppression as a collective problem. As Khalifeh weighs up and discards one position after another (commitment to art, love, and society), her exploration has a clear purpose. It raises questions that mark Khalifeh's *oeuvre* until today: what is the most productive relationship between art and society, and between individual and collective? And how should current social arrangements be changed in order to achieve liberation all round? These, Khalifeh affirms, are not just issues connected to Israeli conquest, but to the kind of society Palestinians want to build.

Wild Thorns (1976)

In Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns* (1976) and *Sunflower* (1980), Palestinian fiction has a forceful critique of Palestinian nationalism and armed struggle. If in Kanafani armed struggle is invoked as a solution to Israeli usurpation and in Jabra as a redemptive self-sacrifice, for Khalifeh it smacks of revolutionary romanticism, disengagement from people's real concerns, and a lack of popular participatory mobilization. Her critique is presented from the vantage point of a rooted, everyday, feminist-workerist perspective: a realism from below. In *Wild Thorns*, she takes the most attacked (as un-nationalist), vulnerable, and oppressed group of workers, the daily migrant workers of the occupied territories, and turns them into agents of everyday *sumūd*, resistance, and potential transformation. A couple of years later in *Sunflower*, she rams the women's question like a horse and cart through Palestinian nationalism and traces its effect on a society reeling from the weight of repression and occupation. By the end, the question of Palestine is reformulated as a national-social question rather than merely as a confrontation between two antagonistic and internally homogenous political nationalisms. Liberation is never reduced to liberating land: it becomes about the search for emancipatory meanings and values.

Wild Thorns tells of Usama al-Karmi's return to the occupied West Bank five years after its occupation by Israel in 1967. Many of the main themes in Palestinian fiction are explored here: return, occupation, resistance,

weakness, historical injury, dispossession, and so on. But there's one question which unties all others: what does liberation mean today? Especially after 1967 when there's a new national movement organized by diaspora Palestinians and when all of Palestine has come under Israeli occupation. Is armed struggle the best answer to Palestinian dispossession, or is a more socially radical alternative needed?

Habiby once remarked (in Karpel's documentary) that for somebody looking down at 48 Palestinians from outer space, they could easily be mistaken for collaborators or traitors – as if the everydayness of living under the imposed structures and institutions of occupation turns victims into complicitous participants. So it also seems to Usama on his return to the West Bank in the novel. His journey over Allenby Bridge and back into his occupied homeland is full of humiliation and interrogation, signifying Israel's harsh conditions of entry. It is also marked by a deep sense of disappointment with fellow Palestinians. For Usama, the occupied seem acquiescent and defeated, smoking 'imperialist' cigarettes, and buying their occupier's products and commodities. 'What had happened to these people? Was this what the occupation had done to them? Where was their will to resist, their steadfastness? His disgust erupted into an angry question: "Where is the resistance then?"'.[13] Addressing his cousin Adil, the main protagonist, Usama asks: 'Is this an occupation or a disintegration?' [which rhymes in Arabic: *iḥtilāl am inḥilāl*, emphasizing the proximity of the two] (28; 27):

> [Nothing had changed] And yet. The people no longer seemed so poverty-stricken. They dressed fashionably now. And their pace was quicker. They bought things without haggling. There seemed to be a lot of money about. There were more sources of employment and wages had gone up. Prices had risen, but people were eating meat, vegetables and fruit voraciously, as though they were starved, stuffing their children. Those who once had not owned so much as a sweater now swaggered about in leather jackets. Those who had not even possessed a scarf now muffled their ears in fur collars. Men's sideburns were longer. And skirts were shorter. Girls had once been servants now worked in factories and offices. They were plumper, too. Something had changed. (26–27; 26)

If anything, *Wild Thorns* is about taking stock of these changes as a way of constructing a politically more realist liberation struggle than Usama's romantic fantasies of armed struggle. The onus of the novel is to show that the military operation that Usama organizes, which targets the Israeli buses that Palestinian workers use to commute to Israel, is a deeply flawed and unsuited to local conditions. Usama not only misreads forced

economic dependency as political acquiescence, but arrives to the West Bank with a ready-made answer to the problem of occupation. *Fidā'i* Usama had already figured out the 'equation' of resistance. What is missing was site of execution:

> He'd never been romantic himself. As least he wasn't any longer, or so he believed. How has he come to that conclusion? Training. Bullets. Crawling on all fours. Pulling in your stomach. Such things make you unromantic in thought and deed. Personal dreams evaporate, the individual becomes a single shot in a fusillade. You can be honed by experience to become a rocket, a guided missile.
>
> That was the logic of it all. They'd said many things and so had we; logical things, historical equations imposed on the individual, making him a single number in the equation. A number. One among others. Thus the equation takes form scientifically, rationally, tangibly. Thus romanticism fades and dreams die. Yes, and poetry dies, along with passion. Everything becomes a link in the chain of the 'cause' itself. (5–6; 7)

Such hard and scientific revolutionary purism seems unnatural in the novel: foreign, isolated, and ineffective. By denying reality, *Wild Thorns* shows that 'armed struggle' is itself the romantic species it so persistently rejects. This is exactly what novelist Yehya Yakhlif objected to in his review of *Wild Thorns* in the Palestinian resistance journal. Springing up to the defence of armed struggle, he complained about Khalifeh's 'negative symbol' for a *fidā'i* and wondered why she didn't portray more 'positive and revolutionary types' from the history of armed resistance in the West Bank.[14] But Khalifeh's choice was deliberate, and her point in the novel was to show that top-down revolutionary equations only lead to self-destruction and severe self-abnegation. Individuality is crushed in the name of instrumentality and organization. It is not that organization in struggle is not necessary. But that the way it is conceived here demands total self-renunciation, even dehumanization (he is a rocket, a missile, etc.). There is no active participation in formulation of tactics or strategy, let alone self-questioning – only an iron logic imposed from above. Dreams, passion, even love are things that get in the way of the 'cause', rather than being preconditions for its fulfilment. The challenge that Khalifeh sets herself in both *Wild Thorns* and *Sunflower* is to show that love and emotions do play a crucial role in struggle and resistance. Contra prototypical nationalist and self-denying Usama, they signify the need for individual self-realization through collective struggle.

The alternative to Usama's alienated self-sacrifice in the novel is, then, a political realism based on social rootedness (organicity), working-class

solidarity, and truth. *Wild Thorns* is a search for such values as a foundation for future change. And unlike *We are No Longer* these values are experiential and lived rather than discursive and rhetorical. They develop within occupied Palestinian society. Adil and (later on) his brother Basil (to whom the novel is dedicated) come to symbolize such alternative political forms. Adil, indeed, epitomizes the structural changes that have taken place in the West Bank as a result of the Israeli occupation. A son of a well-to-do landed family, which can no longer survive from tilling the land, he is forced to secretly abandon his father's farm and work in Israel. *Wild Thorns* is thus very much a working-class novel, focused on tracing the life and labour of occupied Palestinians in Israel. Seen by many as a betrayal of the national cause, the novel is quick to defend these workers' choices.[15] Khalifeh goes further. She clearly shows that Palestinian labourers felt freer working in Israel than working for the Palestinian landed class (despite Israeli racism and humiliation). As Abu-Shehadeh tells Usama when he finds out that both Adil and Shehadeh have abandoned agricultural for industrial labour as daily migrants in Israel: 'Well, it's better over there … "Lots of money," the old man replied. And none of that "come here, you son of a bitch" or "get lost, you bastard". Yeah, better over there. Lots of money. Plenty of easy work' (41; 41).

Khalifeh makes a similar point in a powerful exchange with Habiby that she had after the novel's publication in the Haifa-based communist journal *Al-Jadīd*.[16] Habiby praises Khalifeh's 'social and artistic courage', her honest realism and radical zeal, but questions her depiction of conditions of work in Israel, which he dubs a form of 'whitewashing' of the occupier (37). Habiby also accuses Khalifeh of blaming the victim, by adopting Usama's perspective on landowners in the novel – as he also, paradoxically, admonishes her for not making her own stance as a writer clearer! Khalifeh's response is, quite simply, a radical gem. She not only undertakes a class analysis of West Bank society, showing how different the class structure there is from the one Habiby is familiar with inside Israel, but she also attacks the Palestinian bourgeoisie for their historic neglect and mistreatment of Palestinian workers and refugees there. Khalifeh argues that 'class disparities' (29) in the West Bank meant that the conditions of the working class and poor were 'tragic' and pushed them to search for jobs in the Gulf. This, combined with political repression and dependence on Western imperialism, left the area reeling from underdevelopment and economic backwardness. Khalifeh is also unforgiving about the fact that many Palestinian working women were only freed from the drudgery and humiliation of domestic service by the arrival of Israel: 'The occupation

frees our girls from the slavery of domestic service in the masters' houses. A strong blow, Emile. My head shakes from its force, my neck pulsates, and I will continue to mouth it regardless of what the theorists say. Don't tell me that now is not the time, it very much is. Enough my brother!' (32). For her, the Palestinian ruling class never showed any sign of national solidarity with or sympathy for Palestinian workers. As one worker clearly states in *Wild Thorns*, why should Palestinian workers be asked to forgo their own class interests in the name of a nationalism which merely safeguards the Palestinian bourgeoisie's own rights of exploitation, even as the bourgeoisie itself freely trades and cooperates with the Israeli occupiers? Worse still, Khalifeh continues her charge: what did the rich families of the West Bank do for the internally displaced Palestinians in the 1967 war who for months were left starving and homeless as a result of Israel's expulsions and dispossession measures? Nothing. Such blatant acts of neglect and indifference only confirm, Khalifeh argues, the reason why the underprivileged lack sympathy for Palestinian landowners (as per Khalifeh's hostile depiction of Adil's father as a patriarch-parasite in the novel). It also explains why when the Israeli occupation arrived, offered higher wages and less domineering work conditions, many workers preferred Israeli exploiters over Palestinian ones. For Khalifeh, these facts need to be faced, analysed, and understood, not dodged and swept under the carpet. And class needs to be put in the middle of the national equation in order to overturn many complacent bourgeois assumptions about the real meaning of bourgeois demands for national solidarity. Only such a class perspective will set Palestinian labourers free, Khalifeh suggests.

Wild Thorns, then, evaluates both Palestinian nationalism and the Israeli occupation from the same vantage point: that of Palestinian migrant workers. If Usama comes with a ready-made formula from the diaspora, Adil spends most of the novel searching for a solution to present-day predicaments. To Usama's 'The picture is perfectly clear', Adil replies with: 'There's more than one dimension to the picture' (29; 28). Usama believes that: 'There is only one dimension, one reality, that of defeat and occupation … It's the people themselves that defeat me more than Israel' (69; 62–63). As the novel develops, Adil's 'grave-like' silence (35; 34), inwardness, and despairing drunkenness are nudged, and he is forced to take an active role in helping and safeguarding his fellow workers. This is clearly shown in the pivotal role Adil plays in saving Abu-Saber's life. He drives him back from Israel to Nablus and tries to help him get compensation for his injury from his Israeli bosses. Forms of class solidarity and social support thus develop, alongside Usama's growing impotence and

despondency. If people get in the way of Usama's violent plans, they are supremely important for Adil. Loving them, caring for them, and being lifted by them is crucial for Adil. These become the basis for his evolving humanist commitment in the novel. He's very much part of people's lives, '*one* of them' (97; 83). This confirms Khalifeh Habiby's statement: 'The homeland is the people.'

One major incident clearly marks Adil out from Usama. Unlike Usama, who seeks to punish Palestinians by blowing them up, Adil also shows kindness both to Palestinians and to his enemies as well. Even after Adil experiences Israel's oppressive occupation and daily racism (as the incident in which Zuhdi, Adil's friend and co-worker in Israel, attacks a fellow Israeli Mizrahi worker for saying 'Terrorists! Dirty Arabs' [112; 94]), he is still capable of helping the family of an injured Israeli officer who is knifed to death by a faced-covered Usama in Nablus market. If there's no possibility for cross-national working-class solidarity in the novel (there is later in *Sunflower*), as the racist work incident shows, there is at least a humanization of the Israeli enemy. As Um Sabir is moved by the officer's wife and daughter's suffering, and comes to their aid, Adil is immediately present to take control of the situation. Against shouts of: 'Leave the pig alone … There's a patrol on its way. Can't you see the stars of the man's rank?':

> Adil tore the stars off and tossed them to the ground. Then he picked up the little girl, hoisted her onto his shoulders, and walked off down the empty street. Her mother followed behind, silently weeping. (160; 134)

Seeds of reconciliation are planted in this act. By stripping the officer of his military insignia, potential equality is posited. Adil is then able to treat him as a fellow human being: with sympathy, care, and respect. If Adil reaches out to his humanized enemies, despite Israel's cruel practices, Usama responds with violence and killing. Acts of violence, as Shlomo and Zuhdi's confrontation sparked by a Palestinian guerrilla incident in Bisan shows, only pull Israelis together. Adil's act indicates a different possibility for dealing with Israeli brutality, which *Sunflower* will build on: cross-national cooperation. Khalifeh's depiction of Israelis is, therefore, never reductive, and expresses her socialist sympathies. In this she is similar to Kanafani: anticipating reciprocity among equals. Adil even comes to recognize that his Mizrahi Jewish co-worker Shlomo, however racist, is 'a victim too' (108; 91). Before being provoked by Shlomo, Zhudi himself thinks:

> He remembered what Adil had said. Was is it true that these men were exploited just as he was, equally deceived and misled? Were they too

> victims of economic interests, used to satisfy the ambitions of a select few? But in time of war they put on their helmets, take up their machine-guns and shoot to kill … He shook his head confused by his thoughts. (109; 92)

Even the Israeli prison guards are moved to tears when confronted with a child's search for his imprisoned father: 'Zuhdi looked at the two soldiers guarding the door. They were weeping, too. So you shed tears, then? The barbarity and torture you witness in the prison walls doesn't make you cry, but a boy no more than five does?' (148; 124). And the child's name is Nidal: struggle. This is Khalifeh territory: the occupied and exploited imagine a possible future together with their oppressors. What *Wild Thorns*, then, hankers for is a radical humanist response to oppression and occupation, premised on solidarity and human understanding. Adil doesn't only love his own people, in a gesture of mutuality and reciprocity that Eagleton calls 'political love', he also finds a way of loving his enemy.

Wild Thorns does, though, remain focused on Palestinian society, and asks: what are emancipatory values? These are brought to the fore through the character of Basil, Adil's youngest brother – who aids Usama in his military operation by hiding weapons for him, an act which results in Israel blowing up his (landed) family home at the end. When Basil is randomly picked up and imprisoned by Israel, his experience there is crucial for raising his political awareness. Political consciousness as core value is thus emphasized. In prison, endless discussions about politics and history take place. New concepts are learned: pragmatism, demagogy, capitalism, communism, socialism, compradorism (124; 103). And a new working-class militancy is discovered, where critical self-assessment and collective responsibility is key, as Salih puts it in the prison seminar:

> We must read, plan, act. We must turn our back on the past and look to the future! The occupation won't last forever. That's certain: And when it's over, what will the workers do? They're not peasants, merchants and small artisans any more. Because of the situation we're in, everybody's had to become a common labourer. So what will we do with them when the occupation's over? The oil wealth's all sitting in the banks of Europe, stimulating trade and industry there, not here. Europe becomes prosperous while we stay as we are. The wealth must be distributed equitably. We must industrialize before time runs out. The oil reserves won't last for ever. And then what? Then what, I ask. (125; 104)

Such revolutionary modernization defines Basil's simple yet devastating act at the end of the novel. And this brings us to the second core value he embodies in the novel: truth. Basil is sickened by the web of lies and deceit that suffocates his family. His father is completely unaware of elementary

facts that everybody else in the family seems to know: that Adil has long ago abandoned working in the family farm and now works as a labourer in Israel, and that Nuwar, their sister, is madly in love with imprisoned Salih, as her family is trying desperately to marry her off to other suitors. Denigrating Nuwar's 'spinelessness' and Adil's passivity, as well as his father's 'sickness' and his mother's 'submissiveness', Basil decides to speak out (199; 158). He announces these truths for all to hear. The effect is liberating: it is a settling of scores with the past in order to allow for a new future to be built on more real and solid foundations. To stress this further, Khalifeh has the Israeli army raze the family estate as revenge for the help that Basil provides Usama. The ending of the novel is thus really a new beginning. By not saving his father's dialyses machine from the house which is about to be blown up, Adil basically lets his father die, acknowledging that 'if my father goes on living, we'll all die … In defence of a dignified, honourable life. Let my father die!' (204; 173). Hostility towards an old and useless landed class is clear here, symbolized in the novel by the father's endless hosting of foreign presses and foreign dignitaries in order to inform them about the Palestinian cause even as basic facts about his own family elude him. Feudal time is up, Khalifeh declares at the end.

Hope, as the ending suggests, can only come from Basil and Adil's generation: 'Adil walked through the square in silence, crossing the main street in the centre of town. The street peddlers were crying out their wares: "Fish from Gaza!" "Oranges from Jaffa!" "Bananas from Jericho!"' (207; 176). To cross the market and come out on the other side is to wade through everyday and ordinary life, its bustle, contradictions, and vulnerabilities, and to come out with an emancipatory solution. A realist ending *par excellence*.

Sunflower **(1980)**

Sunflower is *Wild Thorn*'s sequel. It develops earlier strands and adds new ones. A panoramic view of Palestinian society under occupation is undertaken. Different social sites are represented, both in their internal complexity and in their external-relational dimensions. Intellectual and political positions are either questioned from inside, exposed as internally inconsistent, or collided. Like *We are No Longer Your Slaves*, intellectual discussions and exchanges are endlessly staged in *Sunflower* about nationalism, feminism, existentialism, workerism, etc. Yet, unlike *We are No Longer*, a working-class praxis is fully developed here. Sa'diyyah, Zuhdi's widow, becomes powerful enough as a novelistic presence that she pushes

the whole community into a confrontation with the concrete and the real at the end of the novel. That is really Khalifeh's recurring interest here: the truth of society lies with its working-class women. From their unique vantage point, they can identify what needs changing. But without class solipsism: social interactivity is key in *Sunflower*, hence the panoramic emphasis in Khalifeh. Characters from parallel universes combine in collective protest. Both intellectual disengagement and social detachment, on the one hand, and instinct and spontaneity, on the other hand, are overcome. New convergences become possible: action and theory, mass and individual, concrete and abstract, voice and organization. The educators are educated, and Sa'diyyah is able to formulate and pursue her interest through challenge and communication.

The novel begins with a lovers' meeting between Rafif (a new character) and Adil, both of whom work on the same newspaper. Their relationship is a clash of different worldviews. Rafif is full of energy, emotions, passion, and challenge; Adil is careful, narrowly realistic, and can be politically patronizing. She wants to be free, while he seems contemplative and detached. She accuses him of being a typical controlling Eastern man, while he thinks she is reckless and irresponsible. His charge of individualism is countered by her charge of conformism and cowardice.[17] *Sunflower* is partly about their dynamic clash.

Sa'diyyah's story is presented in parallel. Often told in her own colloquial language, this only reinforces her sense of rootedness and social belonging. Khalifeh depicts her as an active, fighting being, overburdened by the demands of working as a seamstress while raising five children on her own. In a powerful homage to female social outcasts, Sa'diyyah's world is turned upside down by a prostitute Khadra, who pushes her into feminist consciousness and women's solidarity: domestic drudgery here meets risk, unconventionality, and social daring. Sa'diyyah meets Khadra on a work trip to Tel-Aviv, and their day quickly descends into chaos. Together they are accused of hijacking a bus; They get imprisoned and are then smuggled back into Nablus by the resistance during curfew. There cannot be a more radical change in routine and perspective for downtrodden and socially conventional Sa'diyyah. Khadra simply educates Sa'diyyah politically. As she's fighting Israeli prison guards, she tells her:

> "They hit me bastards. I spit on them. By God the almighty, if I get hold of one of them I shall castrate him … The father beats, the husband beats, and the Jews beat, beatings on top of beatings. God knows that beatings by Jews are better, at least you feel respectable"… Sa'diyyah was shocked listening to such talk: "What kind of a person is this woman? Never in

> my life have I seen a wilder human being! A human? A human being fears, feels embarrassed, worries about consequences, but this woman is neither afraid nor embarrassed, and doesn't care about consequences. She is odd!" (82)

Khadra's lifestory is empowering, though ultimately not a model for Sa'diyyah. What she shows her is how to fight back against male repression and fight for her rights: 'Meaning, since that day I concluded that the beatings you don't return hurt even more' (87). As Khalifeh explained: 'She [Sa'diyyah] begins to realize that the passive way of solving things is inadequate, and through the experiments and the experiences she has passed through she learns how to be decisive and how to take certain measures and how to deal with practical solutions and how to measure and weigh things for her benefit.'[18]

In this Palestinian feminist *bildungsroman*, Rafif too discovers her resources and capacities for self-expression and organization. This allows for the formulation of a new politics at the end. And is very much part of Khalifeh's realist preoccupations, as Aida Bamia has noted: 'What makes Khalifā's characters real is the absence of heroism in their attitude and a semblance of weakness that transpires through their hesitation in various situations.'[19] To become effective agents, self-discovery is crucial. To reach that point, Rafif's journey from sheltered middle-class life to political and social consciousness is also staged and dramatized in *Sunflower*. She too overcomes intellectual insecurities and feelings of inadequacy and self-loathing,[20] and learns to combine emotions with politics without allowing her love for Adil to come in the way of effective independent action. Individuality and collectivity enter into productive exchange. This radicalizes her own journalistic practice, where women's role is reconceived as central to anti-colonial struggle. She mocks Adil when he seems only preoccupied with cross-border alliances with progressive Israelis (like Khadron), telling him he should build bridges with Palestinian women first. What Rafif wants is radical social and political transformation: an all-round emancipatory process. Her 'real revolution with emotions' (122) shuns Jabraesque self-sacrifice: 'I am not Christ and I won't be crucified' (124). Feminist demands are posited as an intrinsic part of a broad anti-colonial process. Mindful of the women's experience in Algeria, where progressive social demands were silenced in the name of national unity, Rafif clearly tells Adil that Palestine will not be another Algeria:

> And then what will happen to us? What happened to the Algerian women after independence? The women went back to the rule of the harem and to head cover … As if freedom is the exclusive right of men only. And

> us, where's our freedom, and how do we get it? We won't be deceived. Freedom is for man, independence is for man, and advantages are for man, and us? Supporters of the revolution until liberation and independence are achieved. And all we get out of this glory is the women's corner. (119)

Rafīf's challenge is strong. A place for women as equal participants and as feminists needs to be found as part of popular struggle. There's no delaying of rights here, and no gullible faith in empty promises from the national movement. Unity cannot trump social justice. As she forcefully argues during the newspaper editorial meeting (confronting her colleagues' sexism head on): 'Forgo? Forgo my interest? Forgo my right? Forgo my history and experience?' (205). And she says to herself:

> I feel and I think and I know the alternative. I know my history and carry its burden. Since the beginning of your time, I have been living for others and not for myself. I cooked, you ate. I planted, you harvested. I carried your seeds in my belly … And when your hands grab the newborn, he takes your name instead of mine … I lose my identity and my personality in your kitchens and temples. You traded me legitimately and illegitimately. You legislated the laws that you have brought down from the skies … And when my energies have subsided, you reproached me for ignorance. And when I awoke, you reproached me for my anger. (206)

When Sa'diyyah's and Rafīf's paths finally cross at the end, their lives intersect in popular self-organized resistance. As Sa'diyyah resists against the Israeli army's confiscation of her plot of land, Rafīf finds her journalistic calling and feminist voice. Women's issues and national issues connect as part of the same struggle for dignity and freedom. Though Sa'diyyah remains suspicious of Rafīf, they join together to confront their common enemy. Feminist voice plus decolonization – not just women's role in national struggle.

The ending, then, is hopeful and practical-political. Collective acts are seen as meaningful and purposive, and popular participation is held out as the means of self-emancipation. Different constituencies unite in common struggle without losing their separate political identities. That's what *Wild Thorns* and *We are No Longer Your Slaves* anticipate, and *Sunflower* enacts at the end. Praxis becomes the terrain of staging differences and conflicts, and figuring out a progressive way forward. Key here is the notion that the means prefigures the ends: self-determination requires democracy and mass mobilization. As Norman Geras argues: 'The content of the future must already be sketched in the activity of the present. If the means chosen are revolutionary ones, then revolution itself must be seen as a process of political

education, in which its participants begin to acquire the abilities and attitudes indispensible to the new social order.'[21] Self-emancipation means self-transformation through collective organization. As Sa'diyyah in the novel shows, subjective and historical change are interconnected. Both individual and collective transformation are dialectically linked for Khalifeh in 1980, exactly when praxis was beginning to take hold in reality. With the defeat of the first *intifada* and Oslo, this connection is lost. *Gate of the Courtyard* would come to stage it and anticipate its decline at the same time.

CHAPTER 5

Tonalities of defeat and Palestinian modernism

'This is not the time', Adorno argued, 'for political art, but politics has migrated into autonomous art, and nowhere more so than where it seems to be politically dead'. By speaking directly to the world, political or committed art ends up accommodating to it. This was Adorno's fear, and his charge against humanist realism. To be political in today's world requires a new form of art, a highly mediated artefact: 'the principle that governs autonomous works of art is not the totality of their effects but their own inherent structure'.[1] Art makes its point not by communicating a truth that is then received by the listener or reader but by embodying that truth in its sovereign form. As he argues about Schoenberg's atonal music in *Prisms*: 'It requires the listener spontaneously to compose its inner movement and demands of him not mere contemplation but praxis.'[2] Such a withdrawal from social meaning into the deepest recesses of artistic autonomy is the only way to be political. In a world where a reified society has degenerated into total administration and manipulation, and where forms of solidarity and collective action have been crushed, modernist art negates and resists. In a society where praxis exists no more, it safeguards humanism by embodying praxis in its form. Adorno's modernism is, then, a 'withdrawal from a *praxis* which has degenerated into its opposite … [and] only in so far as it withdraws from Man, can culture be faithful to man'.[3] Freedom is served by Schoenberg's musical dissonance and by Kafka's distanciating shocks, destroying the security of contemplation and spectatorship and creating the conditions for uncorrupted praxis and utopian possibilities.[4]

Adorno's conception of modernism is crucial to my discussion of Palestinian modernism. I find Adorno indispensible for understanding modernism in the Palestinian novel from the mid 1970s onwards. This is because draws a direct relationship between modernist emergence and the realm of praxis and politics. Both artwork's changing features and its socio-political conditions of possibility are key. I elaborate on both here,

and tackle the issue of the global validity of Adorno's modernism: how universal is it, and can it describe phenomenon outside of Europe? My argument advances from theory to history, and then to the novel. After delineating the core features of modernism for Adorno, linking disintegration to the end of praxis, I move to Arab and Palestinian history in order to determine its impact on the trajectory of the novel form. I argue that the Arab mid 1970s onwards are, indeed, historically a time of emancipatory recoil and defeat, and show how this determines the aesthetic politics of Palestinian novels of the period: for example, Jabra and Munif's *World without Maps* (1982) and Jabra's *The Other Rooms* (1986). My aim is to show that Palestinian modernism is in fact an aesthetic of defeat that both registers and resists the disintegration of praxis. The end of revolutionary potential in the Arab world, strongest in the period between 1967 and 1973, is thus consequential to the diasporic novel form, ushering in the collapse of realism and the liquidation of the individual. The (Lukácsian) intertwinement of the individual and the social, the private and the private, is lost – only to be replaced by disconnection and atomization. Rather than acting in a fundamentally knowable world, the modernist self is marked by angst and profound disorientation. If Lukács reads this change as total collapse into unreason, Adorno reads it as a form of resistance and redemption.

When do conditions of defeat obtain for occupied Palestinians? With Oslo: a decade after Beirut 1982 – the final episode in the crystallization of Arab reaction and fragmentation. I raise this crucial issue of occupied revolt and its liquidation in Oslo at the end of this chapter, and show how it works itself through Khalifeh's novels of occupation. It is, I believe, apt to discuss Khalifeh's change in style in a chapter dedicated to thinking about the aesthetic dimensions of revolutionary failure exactly because Adorno presents key conceptual tools for making sense of the end of revolutionary praxis. Though Khalifeh never becomes a modernist, many of her realist tropes come to fail. *Gate of the Courtyard*, her *intifada* novel, comes, then, to exemplify both the culmination of challenge and the foreshadowing of defeat. Inwardness and atomization combine here with the centrifugal pressures of collective action. The desire for self-expression and freedom jars against the constrains of Palestinian conservatism and Israeli repression. What Khalifeh's example shows is that, even after the emergence of modernism, realism continues to develop. Rather than turning to unknowability and un-representability, realism responds to the crisis of the individual and praxis in its own terms.

Adorno and praxis

In his writings on modern art, Adorno captures the essence of modernist aesthetic strategy. Art negates an increasingly oppressive, massified, and reified society by turning in on itself. As a response to surrounding conditions of repression and catastrophe, representation and narrative are pitched into crisis. This generates some already familiar features like narrative instability, loss of omnipotence and objective bearings, and scepticism about stable meaning and unity.[5] Key for Adorno are two characteristics: the fragmentation of form, and the disintegration or liquidation of individuality and subjectivity. History becomes horror as a result. Adorno's discussion of Kafka in *Prisms* is a good example: 'Kafka called his writing "scribbling". The thinglike becomes a graphic sign; his spellbound figures do not determine their actions but rather behave as if each had fallen into a magnetic field. It is precisely this as it were external determinations of persons existing inwardly which gives Kafka's prose the inscrutable semblance of sober objectivity.'[6] An individual is caught, and is unable to determine the difference between animal and human, resistance and submission. Modernism is the burden of existing under the sign of this collapse: a fragmented, abstract, and a historical condition, as experienced subjectively and without self-determining agency. Disintegration is neither solipsistic nor reactionary, and here Adorno strongly disagrees with Lukács' assessment of modernism as a reactionary ideology. For Adorno, the liquidation of subjectivity is a protest against oppression and domination. It is, as Roger Foster has put it, 'an ethical critique of objective conditions': '*Contra* Lukács, then, what modernism is able to do is to dissolve the solipsist illusion from within, showing how the very claim *to be* an autonomous subject collapses upon itself, revealing in its interior the experiential conditions that make genuine subjectivity impossible.'[7] Such an understanding of the disintegration of autonomy captures the essence of Palestinian modernism: interiorization registers objective repression, and in Adornian manner negatively evokes the conditions of individual flourishing in the utopian future. Denial speaks the truth of an administered contemporary, and registers the desire for freedom and justice in the future. This is exactly what Adorno saw in Kafka: real autonomy as utopia.[8] It is in such a modernism (true of Beckett too) that 'Adorno saw an approach to the ultimate reconciliation of the individual with a beneficent generality, a free society'.[9] As Martin Jay argues: 'Indeed, if any place-holder of redemption can be found outside of Critical Theory itself, it lay for Adorno only in what Stendhal called "the promise of happiness" that was art.'[10]

What lies at the core of modernist alienation and estrangement is an atomized and fragmented society. A new form of society generates a new form of art. As Adorno argues in *Notes to Literature*: 'The anti-realist moment in the modern novel, its metaphysical dimension, is called forth by its true subject matter, a society in which human beings have been torn from one another and from themselves. What is reflected in aesthetic transcendence is the disenchantment of the world'.[11] Anti-realism is the product of a total society, an administered and integrated political space. If monopoly capitalism signifies this new economic form in Europe, what Adorno emphasizes in relation to art is the system's deep sense of social and economic control and its visibly repressive dictatorial urges.

The crucial point about atomization is that it signifies the lack of oppositional praxis. If realism emerges as a corollary of revolutionary possibility, then modernism emerges as a corollary of its recoil and retreat. Adorno clearly links modernist emergence to the collapse of the organized collective. His is a world where even solidarity has degenerated and turned from a means of mutuality and reciprocity into a means of fear and control. He puts it in very stark terms in *Minima Moralia*: 'Even solidarity, the most honourable mode of conduct of socialism, is sick … In the course of time, however, solidarity has turned into confidence that the Party has a thousand eyes, into enrolment in workers' battalions – long since promoted into uniform – as the stronger side, into swimming with the tide of history.'[12] Peter Hohendahl explains the link between artwork and solidarity well: 'Adorno's philosophy of art is his final answer to the dilemma of social praxis. Adorno offers the authentic work of art as that emphatic opposition that can no longer materialize in political organizations.'[13] And: 'The late Adorno was unable to detect any oppositional class or group that had the potential for revolutionary struggle; in fact, he could not envision a revolution at all.'[14] Similar to many others in the Frankfurt School in the 1940s, Adorno comes to downgrade the transformative capacities of collective organization. Organized politics embody the corruptions and oppressions of surrounding capitalist society, and are no alternative to it.[15] From the 1940s onwards, praxis comes to be seen as a form of succumbing to the dehumanizing existent. As Wolf Heydebrand and Beverly Burris put it in 'The Limits of Praxis in Critical Theory': 'Praxis [or, 'concrete political efforts aimed at individual and social emancipation and transformation'] was increasingly seen as a capitulation to the instrumentalism and positivism which "the negative dialectic of the enlightenment" had brought about'. Social contradictions and revolutionary praxis retreat as critical-theoretical and aesthetic practices take over.[16]

Adorno continues to hold this position even in the face of the revolts of May 1968 and the return of the political subject in European capitalism as agent of social transformation.[17] Contra both Marcuse and Ernest Mandel, Adorno emphasizes the fixed systemic features of late capitalism that signified for him the complete integration of the working-class into the capitalist system and the elimination of any revolutionary potential. The decline in praxis in the post-war period thus becomes the foundation on which Adorno builds his cultural analysis and his conception of modernist aesthetics – the key link I want to utilize here.

What I'm arguing is that the collapse of a historical subjectivity and the end of independent revolutionary politics come to explain not only critical theory and Western Marxism, but Adornian modernist disintegration as well. If, aesthetically, modernism comes to signify the emergence of a whole conjuncture of political defeat, then, philosophically, Western Marxism comes to signify the destruction of revolutionary praxis by Stalinism and late capitalism. As Perry Anderson explains: 'The hidden hallmark of Western Marxism as a whole is thus that it is a product of *defeat*'. And adds: 'This unbroken record of political defeat [from 1924 to 1968] – for working-class struggle, for socialism – could not but have profound effects on the nature of the Marxism formed in this era.'[18] Defeat explains the philosophical and aesthetic turn, and the degradation of revolutionary strategy. There are thus strong affinities between modernism and Western Marxism as conceptual birds of feather. Both usher in a period of political recoil, both mark a distance from politics, and both are preoccupied with their own methods of inquiry and representation.

What of Adorno and the non-European world, where capitalism was just belatedly emerging? One way of gauging this question is to keep to literary criticism. Adorno has, in fact, been neglected in postcolonial criticism, essentially because he is accused of being Eurocentric.[19] But this is a mistake, as his categories and modes of analysis have a broader purchase. Rather than assuming that European equals Eurocentric, postcolonial criticism should not only utilize Adorno's analytic categories but delineate their universal veracity as well. Robert Spencer has recently defended Adorno against the charge of Eurocentricism, showing that 'an Adornian postcolonial criticism is as concerned with the gratuitous longevity of capitalism and imperialism as it is inspired by the prospect of erecting a more just and egalitarian social order'.[20] It is not that Adorno spent as much time on Vietnam as he did on Auschwitz as a site of suffering and torture but that both are inexplicable outside of his connection of capitalist order and dehumanization, economic forms, and socio-political domination. As

Spencer concludes: 'The atrocities bemoaned by Adorno are symptoms of an ongoing catastrophe that calls today for the far-reaching reflection and for the acute sense of moral and ultimately political responsibility that his work exemplifies, even though it only hinted at the larger sphere in which these aptitudes must be applied.' The radical negativity that Adorno reads in modernism can only be understood in the historical context of the universalization of capital. Modernism's renewal and re-emergence as aesthetic strategy is best understood as an expression of a recurring philosophical and representational crisis *in* global capitalist modernity, both in early twentieth-century Europe and later on in the decolonizing world.

At the core of the conception of modernism I am utilizing is a relation between a specific social order and an aesthetic form. What I see most pertinent for understanding the emergence of modernism in the Palestinian context is its tragic dimensions: suffering, loss, alienation, un-freedom, and modernization as a distorted process. The cosmopolitan consumer pleasure of a transnational modernity is absent here, as is the performativity and multiplicity of alternative or marginal identity. This modernism is neither about 'replacing static models of modernist exile with more flexible, more dynamic models of migration, entanglement, and mix-up', where 'flirtation' and 'evasion' are key responses;[21] nor about politically affirmative textual activism that drowns out 'the mythology of its [modernism's] inward turn or its dissociation from politics' and replaces them with 'a dynamic series of aesthetic relationships or responses to the problematic of modernity in which we can see worldwide textual correspondences and intersections among its social and political commitments'.[22] In Palestinian modernism, even irony, 'the dominant of modernist literature [that] is subversive of the modern bourgeois world-view',[23] is either directly linked to historical catastrophe (as with Habiby) or absent in the existentially weighty world of Jabra.

The material basis for such modernism is the rise of the new metropolis, which expresses, as per Williams, 'its intricate processes of liberation and alienation, contact and strangeness, stimulation and standardization'.[24] If Williams is critical of the false universals of metropolitan forms, he does also crucially see them as a 'response to particular conditions of closure, breakdown, failure, and frustration'. This he shares with Adorno: for both, modernism is a real response to conditions of social breakdown and closure.[25] Unlike Adorno, however, Williams takes the extra step in his work of arguing that new metropolises have now emerged in the developing world, where capitalism has had the same decisive impact as in Europe. This seamless extension in Williams' argument simply follows through the expansive

logic of capital as the new universal: 'But one of the effects of imperialist dominance was the initiation, within the dominated societies, of processes which then follow, internally, the lines of the alien development. An internal history of country and city occurs, often very dramatically, within the colonial and neo-colonial societies.' As a result, the 'deprived hinterlands' of 'Calcutta or Manila or a hundred other cities across Asia and Africa and Latin America' now develop material realities specific to capitalism as a social form: massive dislocation and uneven development.[26] *The Country and the City* is thus Williams' response to the universalization of capital as a historically specific formation. Rather than inflating cultural difference or incommensurability ('the alienating screens of foreignness and race'), Williams offers a materialist analysis of empire as part and parcel of capitalist development. This is what he describes as 'a connecting ["social"] process, in what has to be seen ultimately as a common history'.[27] More recent materialist theoretical articulations have also come to grapple with the parameters of global capital. 'Peripheral modernity', 'singular modernity', and 'combined unevenness' have all come to speak of a world which is 'one and unequal' (to use Moretti's succinct formulation), in which inequality is systemic both *within* and *between* nation-states.[28] These clearly testify to the astuteness of Williams' groundbreaking approach.

A new Arab conjuncture

Palestinian modernism, then, arises for the same reasons that Adorno argued it arose in Europe: as a moment in culture which captures the fears and worries about the collapse of collective organization and praxis. I have before linked realism to emancipation and revolutionary conjuncture. Now I want to show that a new form of Palestinian novel emerges in response to new socio-political circumstances: authoritarian restoration and capitalist consolidation, and the liquidation of mass mobilizations and revolutionary radicalism. The shorthand for it can be Beirut 1982, when the Palestinian resistance movement was politically destroyed. But that would be to historically reify a process that begins earlier: it would be to turn a symptom into a cause. The cause was detected much earlier, as Jabra and Munif's *World without Maps* shows: it is in the political rise of a new form of reactionary oil society which comes to signify the end of solidarity and the atomization of Arab life, the symptom of which becomes the Lebanese civil war.

An Arab reified and heavily controlled society emerges in the region as a whole from the mid-1970s onwards. King Hussein's Palestinian

resistance-free Jordan, Sadat's counter-socialist Egypt, and Saddam's repressive Iraq are key moments in this American aligned, Saudi-supported, and deeply anti-democratic conjuncture that characterizes the period after October 1973. If the 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of social and political change and radicalization, the 1970s and 1980s saw a series of breakdowns, defeats, and wars that led to the consolidation of political repression. It is not that the Arab anti-colonial independence moment was not uneven or contradictory, and did not include its own forms of political repression and persecution. That was never the case. It's just that its contradictoriness entailed what one of its main analysts described as a 'social dialectic' between 'domestic autocracy' and progressive forces of freedom, social development, and justice.[29] By 1973, that dialectic was ended. The social and political challenges of the Arab revolution were defeated, and the potential for region-wide revolutionary praxis gone for a generation.

If, then, in 1967 in Samih Farsoun's words 'two opposing political tendencies appeared simultaneously in the Arab Mashreq: a revolutionary one led by the Palestinians and a conservative, accommodationist other led by Saudi Arabia and a defeated and chastened Arab nationalist Egypt of Abdul-Nasser', by 1973 Saudi victory was all but complete.[30] Abdel-Malek predicted as much in 1967, when he argued that without a sustained radicalization of Nasserism through active mass participation and mobilization the Israeli war will only lead Egypt back into the Western sphere. Returning Sinai would come at the cost of subservience and internal restructuring. His prediction, only months after the war, is chilling, and has been confirmed by future developments:

> In the moment of defeat, a rightist pro-imperialist coalition could be installed, supported by or allied to the Muslim Brothers; the massed financial, economic and diplomatic assistance of the United States would be sought, after the denunciation of the whole Nasserite strategy for compromising Egypt's future by allying her too closely with the wrong power, the Soviet Union; and the 'liberation' of Sinai could be obtained to cover the campaign against the Left, a halt to nationalizations, and the return of the privileged.[31]

The Egyptian people, who came out in their millions to reject Nasser's public resignation after the defeat, were unable to reverse their country's change of course. Sadat's new *infitah* (open door) economic liberalization policy comes to mark a new geopolitical shift away from a socialist, Soviet-allied Nasserism towards subservience to imperial US regional imperative.[32] The era of Arab right-wing restorations began apace.[33]

By 1974, a host of developments meant that the moment of decolonization, anti-imperial challenge, and revolutionary potential had been

internally and externally crushed. A new Arab regime was coming into dominance. Socially unequal and elite rather than mass oriented, deeply repressive of popular sentiment and self-organization, and ideologically reactionary, appeasing if not encouraging Islamic fundamentalism and nostalgic restorations. 'Attitudes would change', Adeed Dawisha concludes, 'so quickly that within a few years the discourse of revolutionary nationalism, au courant in the 1950s and 1960s, would begin to sound peculiarly out of place in the pragmatic and businesslike atmosphere of the 1970s'. Prominent Egyptian Nasserite journalist Muhammad Hasaneen Haykal 'encapsulated this dramatic and consequential transformation in his celebrated phrase that *tharwa* (wealth) had taken over from *thawra* (revolution)'.[34] In the new oil decade, the pivot of the Arab world moves both to the Gulf and to the past, marking a region-wide process of Islamic fundamentalist Saudification.[35]

Looking back at this period, Munif saw clear links between the rise to prominence of the oil sheikhdoms, Islamic fundamentalism, and Arab suffering. Dashed hopes of change and radical political transformation affected the region as a whole: 'The Arab preoccupation is one and the same: poverty, dejection, human insult and injury, fear of ghosts, graveyard and ruins, terror of annulled passports, the search for daily bread.'[36] The causes were unambiguous:

> Our crisis is a trilogy: oil, political Islam, and dictatorship. This trilogy is the factor that led to the collapse, confusion, and consequently to the suffering lived by Arab societies in their search for the toad to modernity … The increase in oil and wealth coincided with an increase in reaction and dictatorship which spread throughout the region, mainly due to the inability of other political forces to stand up to the challenges.[37]

In fact, oil allows the state to shield itself from society, and rule over a population that is no longer required for the generation of state revenue, as Hanna Batatu argued about Iraq: 'Oil … was making the state more and more economically autonomous from society.'[38] An economically dispensable population, democratically disenfranchised, is left with little protection from state repression. The suffocating hold of repression and dejection are powerfully conveyed in *World without Maps*, which traces both collective and individual collapse beginning to emerge in the post-1973 era.

The Palestinians felt the desert winds of Arab reaction and the regional fragmentation of state patriotisms early on. The revolutionary aspirations of the Palestinians were savagely clipped in Jordan 1970–1 (in which 5,000 civilians and 1,300 guerrillas were killed), leading to widespread disenchantment and demoralization and, as we saw with Kanafani, a radical

questioning of Palestinian strategy. In a new environment where '[it] was *Arab statism* not *Arab nationalism* that defined the post-1967 era, *wataniya* not *qawmiya* that determined political relations among Arab states',[39] a dispossessed and scattered Palestinian people was forced to succumb to local particularisms. In a new politically curtailed, counter-revolutionary Arab order, Palestinian statehood and independence rather than liberation or revolution became the order of the day. In fact, the Palestinian resistance movement itself was indelibly distorted as a result: soaked in oil money and bureaucratized. Rather than upsetting the Arab regional regime in order to win their freedom and justice, Palestinians were now pressured (and some elites clearly co-opted) to abide by the repressive state system. It is in this context that the Palestinian demand for a 'national authority' or 'liberated land' needs to understood, locking mainstream Palestinian strategy in till Oslo. The Palestinian Left in 1974 read this political change as a capitulation to US imperialism and to the diktats of the Egyptian–Saudi axis, as well as an implicit recognition of Israel, contradicting the wishes and aspirations of the Palestinian masses for justice, return, and self-determination: in other words, as political surrender.[40]

Palestinian historian Yezid Sayigh has charted the transformation of the Palestinian movement from revolution to statehood in his seminal *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, citing Jordan 1970–1 and 1973 as significant turning points in the trajectory of Palestinian politics. In a politically divided Arab environment, and a weakened revolutionary movement, the pulls towards statism, especially for mainstream Fatah, were strong:

> The war offered a historic opportunity, but also posed major challenges. The PLO could seek to join the [Camp David] peace process, taking advantage of the demonstration of Arab military, political, and financial power to make territorial gains. At the same time, to join the regional system and engage in negotiations with Israel would mean a radical departure from the goals and slogans raised by the Palestinian national movement since 1948. In essence the debate was about the historic nature and purpose of the Palestinian national movement, as the revolutionary and statist options were brought into direct conflict.[41]

One could in fact read Palestinian history, as Sayigh does, as a gradual strengthening of the Palestinian statist option, first accepted implicitly in the 1974 Palestinian National Council meeting, and then in practice, including a recognition of Israel in the 1988 PNC meeting. A state-in-exile that was the PLO would, it was hoped, find a territory to rule and be sovereign over. Israeli and US intransigence aside, what Sayigh also shows is that the statehood option was the outcome of revolutionary defeat

and involved 'deepening bureaucratization', and authoritarianism within the movement, which came under the increasing control of Arafat: 'The influx of major Arab assistance to PLO coffers after November 1978 in particular enhanced his neopatrimonial capabilities greatly, and in turn reinforced his personal autonomy, both political and organization, with the Palestinian movement as a whole.' Rather than mobilizing and organizing Palestinian and Arab mass support, and deepening revolutionary praxis, such authoritarianism only led to disorganization and disenchantment. Even the Palestinian Left became complicit with and financially benefited from Arafatian 'neopatrimonia bureaucratization', and became 'deeply enmeshed in Palestinian statist transformation'. Compare that to the moment when Palestinians, as Genet put it, 'were dangerous for a thousandth of a second': when the political horizon of social and political transformation was open, and Arab revolutionary potentialities were on the cusp of realization.

After Black September came exile to Lebanon, entanglement in the Lebanese Civil War, and Israeli expulsion to Tunisia in 1982, and the risk of political irrelevance. This is why, as Helena Cobban argues, 'it appeared, as of early 1983, that the Palestinians were, for a longer or shorter time, to remain trapped in the chronic impotence to act decisively which had afflicted the Arab world since early 1974'.[42] Until the first *intifada* restored the post-Beirut Palestinian body politic to life – a marvellous form of self-organization and mass self-emancipation crushed by Israel and tragically undermined by the deep clutches of PLO bureaucracy and diplomacy. Even then, though, its impact was local to the West Bank and Gaza, with no Arab reach or solidarity to speak of. Twenty years after the Arab revolutionary conjuncture of 1967, the *intifada* sadly confirmed Palestinian isolation from the Arab world. Dawisha put it in his own stark terms: 'Indeed, the only genuine popular eruption in the Arab world after the 1970s occurred in Palestinian occupied territories in the late 1980s, and it had very little, if anything, to do with Arab nationalism. It was wholly Palestinian inspired, built on purely Palestinian concerns, and carrying exclusively Palestinian aspirations.'[43]

In the trajectory of Palestinian political development statism and bureaucratization are symptoms of shrinking revolutionary hopes and diminishing radical praxis. Palestinian modernism came to express the collapse and disintegration of the Arab revolution as well as resist this new oppressive social order that is devoid of anticipatory hope and collective possibility. This is part of what Kamal Abu-Deeb described as 'the collapse of progressive collective vision and project and the disappearance of the

future as a possibility for fulfillment'. Combined with the growing power of Saudi Arabia and its version of Islamic fundamentalism, it produces a revival of Islamic restoration and nostalgia: 'only the [religious] past appears to remain meaningful, coherent, solid, and easily accessible'.[44] For those who shun such romantic anchors, there's alienated inwardness and fragmentation. Scepticism of oppressive assurances and authorities become modes of cultural response and self-preservation. If *World without Maps* ushers in a time of aesthetic disintegration and emancipatory recoil, the period after the PLO's defeat in Beirut 1982 consolidates this new tonality in Palestinian culture and history. Mourning and disintegration come to mark Jean Genet's *Prisoner of Love* (which remembers the revolutionary past as it conveys the confines of existent defeat). Edward Said's *After the Last Sky* (1986), Mahmoud Darwish's *Memory for Forgetfulness* (1987), and Elias Khoury's *The Time of Occupation* (1985) lock in this historical shift as a time of loss, radical contingency, and fragmentation.[45] As Rosemary Sayigh records in her evocatively titled *Too Many Enemies: The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon*, which captures the mood of the new conjuncture: 'There was practically no politics after 1982. It was hard enough just to survive. We had to work to change the bad situation of our masses.'[46] Barbara Harlow also conveyed the difficulties ahead: 'For all the Palestinian determination and resolution, however, in the aftermath of the invasion, the siege, and the massacres, historical solutions were less apparent than the immediate problems.'[47]

A tone of failure and individual alienation thus becomes evident: what is common to Palestinians is no longer a project of struggle and hope but private suffering. For Darwish, the fall of Beirut becomes the fall of challenge to Arab repression and of revolution, leaving Arabs without a political address or a city of hope. This powerful example articulates 1982's defeat and dispossession, its private form and historic meaning:

> Of all people, S is the most anxious at the thought of leaving. He is terrified of becoming an orphan again. He is afraid we will forget him in the rush of these endings. He is one of hundreds of writers who had emigrated to the Revolution, which has become a home and an identity. He has nothing that can identify him: no identity card, no passport, and no birth certificate. That's why he finds in us, who have no homeland or family, a people and a homeland.[48]

Migrancy becomes the Palestinian's elusive sense of continuity for Said: 'we ourselves provide not enough of a presence to force the untidiness of life into a coherent pattern of our own making.' Commenting on Said's text, Homi K. Bhabha picks up this disintegrating thread and talks

about the 'dissolution of history as fragmentary composition; the decomposition of narrative voice. Through this dissemination there circulates the monadic silence, that void that splits the history of the Present, and reveals its structure as an ambivalent, spatial antagonism for which there is no completely coherent discourse'.[49] What both Said and Bhabha ignore is that these Adornian tonalities of defeat arise after the collapse of the revolutionary conjuncture – when Bhabha's undecidabilities were drowned out by Palestinian praxis. In fact, as Moustfa Bayoumi has shown, Said's own interest in Adorno and in his form of resignation and cultural resistance begins after Beirut.[50] Here Said's own modernist response to defeat transposes Adorno's exilic rejection of 'reconciliation under duress' to the Oslo period.[51]

The Palestinian novel also changes, registering a sensibility which is more inward, privatized, and devoid of collective anticipation. It is stuck in the nightmare of history, gutting cohesive and stable subjectivity. Earlier questions about how best to create a free individual in a free society disappear. Fear, insecurity, and a profound sense of moral collapse and disorientation predominate. Jabra's *The Other Rooms* express this new insecurity and indeterminacy, as does Jabra's *Journals of Sarab Affan* (1992), Emile Habiby's rumination on memory and human weakness in *Saraya, The Ogre's Daughter* (1991), and Khalifeh's realist staging of collective failure in the post-Oslo *The Inheritance* (1997). Narrowing constrictions mean that praxis becomes a faint memory. What, nonetheless, sustains a sliver of hope can be put in Adornian logic. If Palestinian modernism is incapable of withstanding the existent crisis on the level of content, it does so on the level of form, by shielding itself and evoking harmony and justice negatively, monadically. Here art as complex inwardness evokes a self-determining utopian potentiality (like Kafka). Waiting becomes a mode of survival, and suffering *pre*-historical.

In order to convey the depth of this distinct 'structure of feeling' (the tones and impulses of a practical consciousness in the process of formation, as Williams has it), I turn to two key novels, *World without Maps* and *The Other Rooms*.[52] Before I do so, it is worth noting that the temporal scheme of 1974, 1982, and Oslo was seen as one continuum of worsening regional conditions and defeat. A growing circle of constituencies came to this realization, beginning with the Palestinian Left, which was the first to register the catastrophic turn of events in the fortunes of radical praxis. In this context, many radical intellectuals came to articulate the need for a new Arab-wide political movement as a remedy. A sample of progressive views can be discerned in *al-Adab* magazine's survey of opinion titled

'Intellectuals and the Defeat' that was published in response to Beirut 1982, which asked intellectuals to determine what role Arab culture could now play in overcoming Arab 'pessimism and surrender'. Contributors like Munif, Syrian socialist novelist Ḥanna Mīna, Egyptian communist Mahmoud Amīn al-'Ālim, Adonis, and Elias Khoury (among three dozen others) analysed the meaning of Beirut. For many, the root cause of the contemporary Arab malaise was an anti-democratic counter-revolutionary Arab elite that has aborted the national liberation movements and accommodated with Zionism and American empire. Against pessimism, they called for a renewal of popular political will as a necessary step towards cultural revivification: a long-term collective struggle for both democracy and cultural innovation.[53] Adonis described 'democratic practice as a form of creativity' and called for a new 'political culture' in an Arab world where 'democratic freedoms' are an urgent demand. Munif's stated objective was mass mobilization as part of a broad-based national front for social justice and independence. To achieve socialist development and Arab unity, he stressed, there can be no circumventing democracy and democratic mobilization. Out of the ashes of the Lebanese Civil War and Beirut, the notion of deep democratic transformation was posited as core demand.[54] Munif's political writings throughout the 1980s present it as a political priority, especially his influential collection *Democracy First, Democracy Always*.[55] In the face of bleak authoritarian consolidation, his novel with Jabra anticipates this critique.

Jabra and Munif's *World without Maps* (1982)

'Ālam Bilā Kharāi'ṭ was published in 1982.[56] Though it is hard to determine the authorial origination for chapters, Jabra and Munif's collaboration brings together two distinct styles: Jabra's knack for intense intellectual discussion and dialogue and Munif's broad social range and historical sweep. This is indeed a unique collaboration in Arab letters, consequential to both writers, but especially for Jabra. As Faisal Darraj argues, it pushed Jabra to grapple with the contours of Arab authoritarian power as political power, a distinct Munif terrain, and that lead Jabra to write what Darraj calls his Kafkaesque novel *The Other Rooms*. Darraj rightly sees Munif as the Arab world's pre-eminent political novelist, culturally intervening 'in a time when politics diminished/dwindled to the extent of being extinguished'. His 'political novel' is premised on the ordinary and everyday struggle of the dispossessed against a brutal and intrusive regime, as Darraj elaborates: 'Heroes don't exist, and there are no heroes victorious

on behalf of others. Living is the human space where the authorities rob man of his humanity, and where man regains his missing essence when he faces the authority uncompromisingly.'[57] This allows for a distinct register to become more pronounced in *'Ālam*: a level of generality that, combined with the focus on power, clearly marks it out as a condition-of-the-Arab-world novel. It is thus Jabra's most historical novel. But Jabra did bring his own formal preoccupations to bear here as well. If *'Ālam*'s society is no longer represented (or filtered) through Jabra's self-sacrificing trope, his denser linguistic register (though no less clear than Munif's) is apparent if not dominant. *'Ālam*, as a result, is one of Munif's more difficult novels, where his 'middle Arabic' (between high literary and colloquial) is less apparent than in *Cities of Salt* or his earlier oil novel *Long Distance Race* (1979).

Ultimately, though, it is neither a Munif nor a Jabra novel, and frustrates attempts at the authorial identification of component parts. The novel was an opportunity for mutual emulation and stylistic borrowing. As an aesthetically unified and univocal text, it enacts collaborative effort and artistic combination and holds up this unity as a value for the Arab world to emulate politically. A new form is created here premised on mutual interdependence and cooperation. Aesthetics thus resists political demise and anticipates the return of democratic possibility.

'Ālam, then, strongly registers Jabra and Munif's common interests in charting the changing fate of the contemporary Arab as figure of challenge and dissent. The present condition of the Arab world is interrogated through the investigative zeal of detective fiction. The plot is driven by the narrator's intense search for the truth surrounding the circumstances of a single event: the death of his long-time lover. She was either murdered by him, by a jealous husband, or, still, as a result of a financial transaction gone wrong. Throughout this journey of anxiety, self-doubt, and self-questioning, stories are narrated and disbelieved, histories investigated and discarded, and theories put forward and withdrawn. *'Ālam* presents a dizzying array of causes and scenarios without ever giving up on the fact that truth and objective knowledge can eventually be had. An account of a possible murder thus becomes about the way the contemporary Arab world is constituted. Private act and public condition are deeply intertwined in a world that, as the title suggests, is ultimately one without maps, without firm objective grounding, and without real social or political anchors. It is also a world of profound alienation and estrangement, where sense-making and meaning-finding activities are constantly failing. Here there's no pleasure in doubt or uncertainty: ambivalence is torturous,

lack of clarity is painful, and memory is unreliable. Even love has been reduced to sexual desire, becoming treacherous and self-destructive. *'Ālam*'s world is, in the final analysis, a world with no relief, no escape, and no end to undecidability. The police report at the end confirms that much is still unknown and in doubt. The search, however, continues, and truth is still pending. Relief is only to be had in writing: literature is the answer. As it opens up a space for argument and engagement, it pinpoints collective causes of corruption and decay. By staging failure, it communicates and resists it at the same time.

In order to try to determine if and how Najwa was murdered, *'Ālam* presents three spheres of investigation. First, there is the interpersonal–biographical sphere, which raises questions about love, betrayal, and sexual games. It also deals with individual features, attitudes to writing and art, and personal trajectories. Second, there is the familial sphere, where past family events or inherited dispositions are used to explain behaviour in the present. Issues of discovered blood-relationships, cross-generational similarities or differences, and inheritance rights come into play here. This sphere also contains a powerful prophetic component (replicated in *Cities of Salt*). 'Ala's Sufi aunt Nasrat constantly invokes visions of devils, snakes, and evil-doers, forewarning 'Ala and guarding him from curses and bad omens. Her presence and her words endlessly shadow his. Third, there's the public-political sphere. Here politics is the dominant explanatory framework. Hopes, defeats, and programmes are presented, and commitments and acts are explained. The political also contains a powerful spatial component. The city of 'Amuriyya (a fictional creation in which the novel is set) is spoken about as a place with specific social and political features that have developed and changed over time. If it used to be politically alive and radical, it is now a stagnant and corrupt capitalist metropolis, ruled by money and oil interests. Administered and reified, it has many of the markings of Williams' new metropolis: no collective resistance or solidarity or real community to speak of. A new 'social deformation' is exactly right, as Williams elaborates: 'Yet what we have finally to say is that we live in a world in which the dominant mode of production and social relationships teaches, impresses, offers to make normal and even rigid, modes of detached, separated, external perception, and action: modes of using and consuming rather than accepting and enjoying people and things.'[58] Even *'Ālam*'s causal identification and spatial knowability become a luxury in the nightmarish world of *The Other Rooms*, Jabra's next novel. Under worsening authoritarian rule, social terror reigns supreme.

The fact that the three spheres (personal/familial/political) constantly intertwine and interconnect makes it nearly impossible to determine which sphere is primary. Is Najwa, for example, killed as a result of a feud over inheritance or by a jealous husband? Does Adham, ʿAla's brother, join the Palestinian resistance because he is so similar to or so different from his Arabist uncle Ḥusam al-Raid? And isn't their relationship a form of 'complementarity in opposition' (184), where the nephew actually lives out politically his uncle's purely culturalist inclinations for challenge and adventure? Is ʿAla at the beginning of the narrative depressed and immobile because he is ill and drugged up, or is his weakness a general retreat of radical energies in ʿAmuriyya at large? *ʿĀlam*'s multi-causal structure makes it ultimately very hard to tell, or to pinpoint one decisive cause. This is part of the novel's dominant sense of ambivalence: there are many possible interpretations and many possible motivations. In *ʿĀlam*'s portrait of mid-1970s Arab history, only a mapping out of accumulated effects seems possible. Take the following sentence by ʿAla: 'What am I talking about now? Once again, thoughts, and desires, are mixed up with realities. Distinguishing between them is a great challenge, and my task is to re-arrange the parts, gather the mutually repelling atoms, maybe the picture will become clearer – become clearer to me, at least' (91). ʿAla is unable to reconstruct the past in any meaningful form, logic, or sequence. Parts refuse to cohere or come together.

> It would have been easier if I were only the product of my personal experience (and my family experience at that). Or if I were only the product of my national historical experience. It would have been easier, or at least the road ahead would have been clearer, and I would have known where I was going – even if to the point where there would be something, or someone, to save me from being lost in the wilderness. But my personal experience was entangled with my historical experience. (92–93)

The novel is about the search for meaning and coherence, even if ultimately unresolved.

For Jabra and Munif, however, the political-public sphere remains a crucial part of the contemporary Arab crisis, evoking contradictory and divergent responses. The crisis presents itself as a problem of form: how to construct a relationship between the personal and the collective that is effective and real, as ʿAla suggests:

> It is enough to act collectively for your individual will to be robbed from you after two or three days. And it is enough to act individually to be ostracized, one way or another in a couple of days. And if you tried to find the connection – which you imagine must be kinetic, dialectical, and

> generative – between your inner self … and the essence of a collective driven to the future by yearning, and controlled from every direction by terror, inside and outside, you will only discover that the connection you established is yet another illusion, one that barely leaves a scratch on your historical reality, one that muddles your inner voices. (93)

In present day 'Amuriyya, there is a disconnect between personal and political. It is as impossible to find oneself in mass struggle as it is to overcome the surrounding grimness of city life. If the city has changed physically, growing anarchically and without logic, then its people are to blame for that. It is a symptom of their powerlessness and impotence. In the post-war oil boom, spaces and values have been distorted. Inauthenticity dominates life, suffocating souls and dreams. 'Oil, of course, has a deep impact. It was discovered by the Americans, and they taught people to sin all the seven sins' (81). Distorted by 'easy money', the city could neither 'preserve its past nor enter the future' (83–84). It's not that life before the oil decade was ideal, or that cruelty and poverty didn't exist. The elite's political opportunism was clearly visible then too, especially their willingness to exploit and betray the fruits of people's struggle for freedom and independence. It is just that olden times were more 'merciful and humane' (94):

> 'Amuriyya knew what it wanted then. And this is what made her radiant, determined [resolute], and courageous in those days. It's true that the period which preceded my ['Ala's] departure was full of pain and suffering, was full of muffled late night screams. But the screams were of those who were trying to plow ahead, who wanted to lift a heavy weight off their chests that was many decades old. (82)

1967 is seen as an earthquake which temporarily generated a new language, and new resources of challenge, epitomized in *'Ālam* by Adham. He joins the Palestinian revolution in Lebanon as an affirmation that only force can erase the Arab world's weakness and its rulers' treachery and betrayal of Palestine and Arab progress. Adham combines revolt with hope and anticipation for a better future. In Lebanon, he finds both politics and love, and in him the novel presents the only significant successful combination of both (in a repetition of *Walid Masoud*'s main trope). Yet in *'Ālam*, the register is very different. The emphasis is on the 'Amuriyyian society he leaves behind, on the Arab-wide condition of deadness and stagnation that he recognizes and criticizes on his visits back to 'Amuriyya.

Death also catches up with the revolution in Lebanon. Rather than freeing Adham and turning him into an agent of Arab freedom, the revolt is suffocated. As he tells 'Ala: 'Death is everywhere, not only in Shiah,

Sabra, Tal al-Za'tar, and Fakahani … It's everywhere, and will reach all places' (255). His description of Lebanon's civil war is apocalyptic, and conveys the fact that Palestinians have now become terrorized victims of other Arabs, not just of Israel. Black September is yet again repeated, and the death knell of Arab national solidarity and cooperation is yet again sounded: Ḥusam al-Raid's dream of freedom and unity is drowned in blood (al-Raid literarlly means the explorer or leader). Adham's account is worth quoting in full:

> It is not because each one of us is threatened with death every moment. And not because each one of us threatens others with death every moment. There could be some logic in all of that, or some will, or maybe a necessity, the necessity to defending oneself. However, that foolish killing, the blind, vicious, crazy killing … the murder of women, children, the sick, and the wounded, of nurses, doctors – to be gunned down at the hands of real people, human beings like us … to be killed deliberately, in cold-blood, and blindly … Oh, the sight of the corpses, their smell! How can I describe those days of madness? Those days of thirst, screams, and gratuitous killing? How can I but be with the victims, where a new Deir Yassin awaits them at every bend? And in Tal al-Za'tar, there were no wells to throw the murdered and pregnant women into their depth in the darkness of the night. The killing happened in the middle of the day, in clear daylight. Gratuitous murder, a sadistic, evil, ignorant spirit … In 1948 and 1967, the Zionists killed them with their own hands. Now, they are being killed by intermediaries, at the hands of brothers and relatives, by remote control – at the hands of those who were supposed to protect and defend them. And the world, to hell with it, it watches, silent and motionless, as if nothing is of concern. A criminal conspiracy of silence, a filthy one, continuing to no end, as the cries of others fills the world for matters a thousand times more trivial … Can I not but be on the side of the murdered, with the victims, until the terror ceases, until the barbarism ends, until the stifled voice of justice is heard? Until people return to their humanity, if it returns. 'Ala, have people lost their reason, lost their heart, lost everything, and only their claws and fangs remain? (256)

Compared with the 'real torment' (258) of being a living dead or eternal sufferer, death is a better option for Adham: it has finality. Reinforcing a prevalent sense of a world with no hope, no alternatives, and no oppositions, there's no end in *'Ālam* either *in* death or *to* death. Adorno would have recognized such Kafkaesque disintegration of agency and individuality, such a collapse of praxis and contradiction.

Yet, glimmers of hope remain. Adham goes back to fight. And even though 'Amuriyya has become hellish and besieged, 'Ala refuses to become

un-dead, especially now that he's lost his youthful naivety about being 'a saint or prophet' of change and rebellion. If only Najwa ('my one-time saviour') hadn't herself changed so much and evoked a deep sense of 'astonishment and confusion, and then anger' in him (95). In typical Jabraesque manner, it is love that motivates resistance and challenge. As the last bastion in a corrupt and degenerate world, love awakens desire and demands a re-engagement with life. But it is also a love that is deeply marked by its compromised and conformist environment. Like the modernist artefact itself, it is a love constituted by existent repression and unfreedom. Unlike *Walid Masoud*, there's no redemption through love in *'Ālam*. Love leads to violence and self-destruction, and is always mixed with pain and suffering. Najwa challenges 'Ala, questions his writing, and accuses him of underplaying the role of women in his novels. Your characters, she tells him, are oppressive towards one another. If their love reignites self-questioning and hope, it does so only momentarily and fleetingly. Najwa turns out to be (or wasn't she always?) as corrupt as 'Amuriyya, as money grubbing and power hungry. Rather than merger or mutual self-realization, love comes to reflect surrounding hate and fear.

If there's a potential redemptive power in *'Ālam*, it is the act of writing itself. Writing is neither reified as a sole vehicle of truth nor left unquestioned and unchallenged. Najwa pushes 'Ala to write about the 'missing truth' (138). A character in one of 'Ala's novels jumps out into the narrative and proclaims his disagreement with his maker over heroism and possibility. 'Ala constantly feels that it is impossible to represent the reality of a world where 'truth has been chocked by money' (142) and where imagination has been crushed by oppression. Even though literature is at times associated with dreamy alternatives rather than real possibilities, what remains powerful in the novel is the sense that novel-writing is an effort in getting at the truth. Literature represents this initiative and effort, and herein lies its task in *'Ālam*: to seek causes and reasons in a world cynical enough to cease looking and searching. If there's hope at all in the novel, it is in fiction that fights amnesia, loss and disillusionment, and affirms the possibility of knowing how the world is actually constituted in order to be able to change. *'Ālam* is ultimately, then, about self-empowering knowledge and self-questioning truth. Both values are necessary in order to overcome the Arab world's present life-in-death. Through critique and diagnosis, *'Ālam* attempts to forge an anticipatory hope for a politics which is as yet absent. As Bloch posited: the 'not-yet-existing' but 'actually possible'.[59]

Jabra's *The Other Rooms* (1986)

The disintegrative processes identified in *ʿĀlam* have all intensified in Jabra's short novel of the 1980s. The narrative anchors that were key before (a defined city, public-collective commentary, personal history) have become impossible to pin down here. *The Other Rooms* is a mockery of the detective elements of *ʿĀlam*.[60] How can one disentangle causes from effects in a novel that essentially relays an extended nightmare? The reader and protagonist enter a world of unknowing and undecidability. Nothing is what it seems here: knowledge leads to ignorance and more doubt, solidarity to atomized suffering, and reason to unreason. The novel's Adornian atonalities and a dialectic of dis-enlightenment convey this nightmarish disintegrative yet resistive moment: a form that constantly undermines its own claims, yet never stops searching for truth or foundations – a modernist paradigm *par excellence*.

In a society of total control, where war and the Saddam Hussein's security state rule supreme, *The Other Rooms*' monadical energy tries to stand as witness, to make sense of a senseless world of state paranoia and repression. Written in the midst the utterly senseless Iran–Iraq War, the longest conventional war in the twentieth century, the novel is marked not only by wartime insecurities and state-induced anxieties and control, but also by a deep sense of ultimate futility.[61] Like in the war, nobody is, ultimately, sure why things happen in the novel, or if and how they will ever end. Only suffering is guaranteed. This represents wartime Iraq well. As Eric Davis argues, there was no hiding 'the reality that, by the end of the 1980s, the Ba'thist regime was built on a sectarian and social class base that privileged an increasingly lawless and rapacious elite'.[62] Jabra expresses not only his own fears of living under such a brutal yoke, but also the human degradation of the Iraqi. The state terror expressed in *The Other Rooms* was real, and intellectuals like Jabra who chose to remain in an increasingly authoritarian Iraq rather than leave and safeguard their intellectual independence paid a heavy price. Literature was Jabra's way of naming what he was forced to adapt to: an ideology and practice of political persecution and state tyranny.

The novel's plot is simple. The protagonist is whizzed off from a city street into a compound, and is moved from one room to another for no evident reason. He keeps meeting the same people, renamed and in disguise. He is also not sure of his own identity, is constantly given different names, and finds himself on a panel being asked to lecture and discuss his critically acclaimed book *The Known and Unknown*. Along the way,

he has erotic encounters with women, is taken to a room full of security files on people, and remains in a state of doubt and confusion throughout: feeling tortured, controlled, and un-free. The suggestion at the end is that the nightmare is actually real, and about to begin again. What Jabra thus conveys, like *ʿĀlam*, is that what the protagonist is experiencing is not only a state of mind, but a new situation in Baghdad. Unlike all his other novels, *The Other Rooms* ends with 'Baghdad' as site of authorship, suggesting that the novel was not only written *in* Baghdad but that it is *about* Baghdad.[63] The nightmare is collective, even as it is experienced by isolated individuals.

The condition that Jabra evokes is one of oppression that destroys individual agency and collective solidarity. Both are seen to fail in the novel. The individual is crushed and disintegrates by an over-administered society, and the collective is a community of sufferers: either spectating in mass (looking all alike) or waiting for their salvation (sitting in anticipation in front of a door that never opens). If before Jabra could utilize individual self-sacrifice as a tragic mode of collective redemption, as a trope of connecting the individual with the public, here the disconnect is obvious. The disjuncture is a symptom of the collapse of both entities: individual and collective have been indelibly distorted. It is not only that the public is inactive, but that, like the individual, it has simply disintegrated as actual and potential agent. An agentless individual and a dazed and un-free collective come face to face and register their hallucinatory atomization. There is no stronger way to convey the shift that has taken place in the Arab world from anticipations of individuals finding their freedom through collective struggle to a condition of all-round crisis and collapse.

The Other Rooms is Palestinian literature's most powerful invocation of that degenerative state. It is Palestinian modernism's most pristine articulation: exposing history as a nightmare even as it speaks it, conveying the whirlwind of the existent even as it attempts to shock the reader out of its hold, and capturing the liquidation of the self by a Kafkaesque 'magnetic field' of external determination even as it strives and fails to withstand it. In Jabra's insistence to articulate his protagonist's fall, suffering, and withdrawal lies a sliver of utopian redemption. Maybe that is all there is, and all that is possible under such conditions of extreme domination. Until the renewal of praxis, that is.

The Other Rooms, then, embodies modernism's key artistic distinction and achievement for Adorno. And belongs in his modernist company: 'Only through their extreme formal construction do the works of Kafka or Joyce and Beckett become legitimate witnesses to this [extreme

historical] horror – reflections on the failure of historical progress'.[64] The defeat of Palestinian emancipation and the reconstitution of the Palestinian tragedy of atomized dispossession in an administered Arab world are very much a part of this twentieth-century horror.

Occupied defeat in Khalifeh's *Gate of the Courtyard* (1990)

What of the occupied? Their defeat comes a decade later. In the history of the occupied, Oslo marks both the end of emancipatory praxis and a structural change in the nature of the Israeli occupation itself: from reliance on Palestinian labour in Israel to closure, exclusion, and labour dispensability in Oslo. In a matter of a couple of years, Palestinians move from being exploited Black South Africans to dispensable Native Americans (closure and blocking of free movement begins in 1991, as Amira Hass endlessly reiterates in her *Haaretz* reports).[65] Zionism comes here to reverse its pre-Oslo partial inclusion logic and reverts back to the days of near complete exclusion and segregation that characterize its settler colonial nature from the beginning.[66] In Khalifehian novelistic terms, we move from the labour struggles of *Wild Thorns* in the 1970s to the despair of *The Inheritance* and fragmentation and violence of *The Image, The Icon and the Covenant* during Oslo.[67] Aesthetics thus responds to shifting political terrain. The end of mass revolt, therefore, marks a period of Palestinian retreat. The PLO bureaucracy becomes subservient to the USA and submits to Israeli security and colonial diktats. Palestinian aspirations for freedom and justice are again downgraded: if before it was from revolution to statehood, now it slides further down from statehood and decolonization to a long drawn out process of illusory peace-making. Nigel Parsons has meticulously traced the latest juncture in this process, characterizing the Oslo deal in the following terms:

> The asymmetry is clear: in return for the PLO's recognition of the state of Israel, an agreement not to specify borders, acceptance of Resolution 242 with all its pitfalls, de facto acceptance of Israel's apartheid legislation in the occupied territories, a commitment to make the PLO responsible for Israeli security, and arbitrary emasculation of the Palestine National Charter, Arafat gained Israeli recognition of the PLO as a suitable negotiating partner. There is no commitment to a Palestinian state and no mention of the Palestinian right to self-determination.[68]

This meant that the exiled PLO bureaucracy exploited the *intifada* to regain political initiative over the question of Palestine 'through co-optation, demobilization, and the centralization of power in the

apparatus of the PA, with the person of Arafat at the center of the web'. As Glenn E. Robinson put it in *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*: 'the elite that actually took power in Palestine after Oslo was not the same political elite which produced the Intifada. Put bluntly, the PLO in Tunis successfully captured political power in the West Bank and Gaza not because it led the revolution but because it promised to end it'.[69] Ending Palestinian praxis, demobilizing mass revolt, and disbanding democratizing forces are Oslo's condition of possibility. That the PLO bureaucracy was a key part of this anti-plebeian convergence is clear, thereby repeating its post-Black September role of bureaucratizing, corrupting, and manipulating popular will. As Mona N. Younis emphasizes: 'But while the mass base of political participation expanded within the territories, the political leadership in exile was ultimately able to assert its control, thereby aborting the experiment in participatory democracy already debilitated by Israeli repression'.[70] Oslo capitulation, compounded by diasporic political defeat and region-wide counter-revolt, became the root cause of the disintegration and liquidation of Palestinian agency.

Khalifeh charts this history in her novels. *Gate of the Courtyard* emblematizes how long and precarious the journey to emancipation still is, while *The Inheritance* shows how dissipated and meaningless Palestinian energies and collective acts have become in Oslo. With defeat, the gates of possibility are shut: cynicism and religious fundamentalism reign supreme. And liberation as a progressive process of democratic self-emancipation is no longer available. In a world without progressive options, Khalifeh comes to write about causes that refuse to disappear.

Khalifeh responds to the *intifada* with *Gate of the Courtyard*, which is published in 1990. The novel, like the *intifada* itself, represents a culmination of two decades of organization and challenge. And this is what makes it so compelling as a novel about revolt: both capturing the moment of rupture itself as well as the problems of transformation, which seem insurmountable. Khalifeh's main protagonist Nazha (which means honourable in Arabic), a Nablus prostitute, forces her struggling community to recognize her humanity and voice: feminist consciousness clashes head on with anti-colonial nationalism. Nazha, as Amal Amireh argues: 'tells a story that is not usually told by the dominant nationalist narrative: a story of a divided, cruel, hypocritical, patriarchal society that exploits poor women like her then scapegoats them'.[71] As women participated in *intifada*, they pushed their own demands for equality and recognition, and began formulating their vision of a socially just post-independence society. This was 'a powerful

social force for the intensification of contradictions within Palestinian society'.[72] The novel registers this social and political 'shaking off' and traces its development. It shows how democratic self-organization reached its height in the first year of the *intifada*, and how anxieties about defeat became more pronounced already in its second year. This structure of feeling is consonant with the actual history of women's participation in the *intifada*.[73] In an interview Khalifeh gives then, she argues that without an emancipatory social horizon for women the *intifada* risks more pain and social suffering:

> Intifada implies the revamping of a social structure from within as well as resistance to occupation. It may be too early to come to any conclusions regarding the changes that the intifada will bring to the lives of women. But we must begin to pose certain questions. Has the intifada delivered the social transformations that it has promised? Did it liberate the individual? What has it done for women? And why did the participation of women diminish during the last phase of the intifada? Is it because women feel that they have no role to play, or is it because society is torn by contradictions? All the intifada slogans call for the liberation of the individual as well as the land. Is there a double standard when this individual is a woman? My role as a committed writer requires me to raise these questions in my writings.[74]

Gate of the Courtyard takes a hard look at these questions of women's emancipation, and leaves them as unresolved as they are in reality.

This *anxious irresolution* is ultimately the novel's contribution. While charting the expansion of revolutionary challenge, it also foreshadows the possibility of defeat and failure: combining community and collectivity with the alienation and atomization of social oppression and Israeli mass arrests and curfew. At the end: women remain neither free nor equal partners in struggle; Palestinians are enclosed in the domestic sphere; and collective connections are deemed precarious and hemmed in by Israeli violence and the rise of religious fundamentalism and social conservatism.[75]

This explains why Khalifeh's form in this novel is choppier and her tone less certain than her earlier panoramic realism: private verging on inward; contemplative and defensive; and ultimately unresolved. Palestine is diminished in the process. As the main protagonist says at the end: 'Tell him, tell him, your Palestine is like an ogre, it eats and swallows and is never sated'.[76] The Palestinian cause is here seen as a series of onerous demands with few returns. Palestinians are reduced by external repression and internal obstruction, and their self-sacrifice blocks rather than enhances self-realization. Struggle is far too entwined with failure.

This *intifada* mood is also captured in Michel Khleifi's film *Canticle of the Stone*, from 1990 as well. Khleifi's homage to the *intifada* is not only politically and aesthetically radical (mixing documentary with fiction), but also profoundly troubled and anxious. Individual and women's emancipation are powerfully brought to the fore and left unrealized in a diminishing and now manipulated collective struggle. Social emancipation clashes with increasingly visible elite nationalism and conservatism. As Khleifi states in his 'footnote' to the film: 'By juxtaposing elements of the real with a fictional love story at the heart of the painful and tormenting violence of the Intifada, this became a filmic act aimed against the perception of the other as something abstract. It is against this perception that we wished to testify'.[77] Artistic form here both represents contradiction and intervenes for freedom. In the decades since the first *intifada*, it has been easy to forget that both Palestinian politics and culture have generated such a radical emancipatory vision. The first year of the first *intifada* is the closest Palestinians have ever come to its realization. Both *Gate of the Courtyard* and *Canticle* embody its radical kernel.

Epilogue: remembrance after defeat – Gate of the Sun *(1998)*

The Palestinian crisis and political collapse which modernist disintegration registers aesthetically is far from over. The failure of the first *intifada* and the institutionalization of Oslo *locked in* the end of mass, self-organized emancipatory praxis for years to come. The second *intifada*, which began as a popular mass non-violent revolt against Oslo and further colonial expropriation, was quickly pushed by massive Israeli repression to violent struggle, turning the majority of Palestinians from participants into spectators yet again.[1] Demobilization, co-optation, and subservience to US–Israeli diktat continue to inform a key component of Palestinian organized politics. The major alternative to Oslo capitulation has not come either from revolutionary or progressive forces. Faced with the massive collapse of the politics Palestinian self-determination, religion has been mobilized as a solution to colonial injuries and wrongs. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, an American New World Order of imperial outreach exemplified in Iraq 1990–1 was challenged by America's own old ally against revolution, communism, and secular nationalism: some Islamic fundamentalist formations. In the Palestinian context, radicalization came with the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 (as in the case of Islamic Jihad) and in the first Palestinian *intifada* itself (as with Hamas).[2] For the next twenty years, the Oslo elite clashed with increasingly popular Palestinian Islamic fundamentalists (who won the Legislative Elections in 2006). The internal antagonism was powerful enough to divide the body politic of occupied Palestine itself and fragment it into a Western-allied, PA ruled West Bank and a Hamas-ruled Gaza. This instituted a political separation already put in place by Israel's closure and segregation policies both within the West Bank and between the West Bank and Gaza from 1991 onwards. An apt description of such Palestinian decomposition may well be that by neglected modernist Palestinian poet Tawfiq Sayigh

(1921–71) when he said: 'My homeland is two conflicting homelands/ Exhausting their powers/While the enemy plots.'[3] In the absence of an emancipatory project to counter Israel's relentless colonization of land, its violent military destruction, and its ongoing reduction of human life, Palestinian collective fragmentation ensued. Contradictory interests and political cynicism would come to define occupied culture and society.[4]

Political illusions have been very costly for the Palestinian people. If one section of Palestinian intellectual and political leadership was trapped in its own delusions about US diplomacy and partnership with the Israeli occupier, another was trapped in a particularist and exclusionary vision of Palestinian society, with a robust agenda to Islamize growing aspects of social life, exclude women from equal power or regard, and articulate an everyday language seeped in religious verse.[5] This too can be read as an outcome of the failure of Palestinian universalism. Islamic resistance fills the vacuum left behind by revolutionary failure and national defeat. If religion here acts as what Marx dubs 'heart of a heartless world, and soul of a soulless world', what it evidently lacks is a humanist vision of all-round justice and self-realization. Such a vision was intellectually and politically prevalent in the radical conjuncture of 1967–3, and existed as both critique of existent Arab society and as anticipation of universal self-determination (individual and collective) in the future. Compare that to the self-alienation and social conservatism of contemporary political parties.

On top of permanent occupation and intensifying Israeli colonization of land, the cruel siege and wars on Gaza, and Palestinian political degeneration, another key obstacle for Palestinian emancipatory re-emergence needs to be considered: the deprivation and political fragmentation of the Palestinian diaspora after both Beirut 1982 and Oslo. If Oslo marked the demobilization of praxis and revolt in occupied Palestine, it also signified the political abandonment of Palestinian refugees in the Arab world. As the PLO bureaucracy shifted resources and political focus to co-policing the occupied with Israel, Palestinians outside were left to fend for themselves. They mainly opted either for religious consolations or private solutions to their neglect and marginalization. It is hard to imagine that such conditions would now generate the radical sweep of *Hunters in a Narrow Street* or the challenge of *Returning to Haifa*. Conditions today are dire. Iraq's Palestinians, for example, either languish in new exile or continue to experience the devastations of America's occupation and sectarian civil war. Kuwait's hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled because of Arafat's catastrophic support for Saddam Hussein in the 1990–1 crisis.

Palestinians in Lebanon live a right-less existence in conditions worse than South African apartheid. In Syria today, a peaceful popular revolution turned by massive dictatorial repression and destruction into a violent civil war has devastated a whole country, with hundreds of thousands dead and millions displaced. Syrian Palestinians suffer in this Syrian carnage as well. Jordanian Palestinians never recovered politically from Black September, and they remain today either economically co-opted or completely disenfranchised. In Israel, Palestinians continue to fight against a dispossessing state and intensifying popular racism, with new plans underway to expropriate Bedouins in the Negev.

For Palestinians, then, the closing off of emancipatory possibilities in the Arab revolutionary conjuncture has not yet ended. The first *intifada* now seems like a momentary break, however powerful and resonant, in this ongoing disintegrative pattern. What this means is that Palestinocentric forces are not enough for all-round Palestinian self-realization and emancipation, and that the Arab world as a whole remains key in Palestinian aesthetic and political developments. That this is so reflects material conditions. The burden of Palestine is too much to bear by Palestinians alone, and requires Arab region-wide involvement and mobilization. A positive recent development in this regard is the return of exactly that through the new Arab uprisings. Recent revolutionary stirrings have indeed re-introduced mass mobilized, self-organized praxis to the Arab political equation. Its core demands are universal: democracy, dignity, and social justice. In commenting on the uprisings' main slogan of 'the people want' Gilbert Achcar argues that: 'The coming of the day of reckoning expressed in this collective affirmation that the people *want*, in the present tense – that they want here and now – illustrates in the clearest possible way the irruption of the popular will onto the Arab political stage. Such an irruption is the primary characteristic of every democratic uprising.'[6] The deepening and intensification of democratization can only bode well for a Palestinian question that remains at the heart of Arab popular sentiment. Democratic mobilization may yet bring the period of Palestinian collapse and Arab disintegration to a close. But here too anti-democratic *ancien régimes* and regressive political movements and ideologies stand in the way. Intense and violent internal antagonism is the order of the day. Whether the outcome will reflect the uprisings' core universal demand of economic and political justice is yet to be seen.

The present moment is thus rife with contradiction and possibility. Taking stock of the new Arab conjuncture is key, especially for Palestinians. Exactly because there is no way out of their current colonial predicament

other than through deepening Arab self-participatory organization and revolt. With the end of both capitulation and regressive resistance, the confident consciousness and creativity that obtained in the golden age of the Palestinian novel may well return.

It is not my intention here to extend the remit of this study outside of my four chosen writers, or to schematically account for the contemporary novelistic scene.[7] I do hope, however, that another exception to my selection of authors and novels is warranted (in addition to Genet's *Prisoner of Love*). I justify *this* exception by the fact that no contemporary Palestinian novel has had such broad cultural appeal or political impact as Elias Khoury's *Gate of the Sun* (1998), even spawning an anti-settlement protest encampment in the occupied West Bank called Bāb al-Shams. Political fact here takes its lead from fiction.[8] No other contemporary Palestine novel has been a focus of such public attention and critical endorsement, or has managed to articulate how Palestinians think about their own existence and tragic history. Written by a Lebanese who joined Fatah, worked with Anis Sayigh and Darwish in *Shu'un Filasṭīniyya* in the 1970s and 1980s, and now edits the Arabic edition of *Journal of Palestine Studies*, *Gate of the Sun* has become (like its author) part of the Palestinian story. If, in my brief discussion below, I cannot pay it the justice it deserves, what I would like to do is to examine it in the context of my main thesis about the aesthetics of revolution and defeat. Especially because it mediates current Oslo loss so powerfully.

The main Palestinian protagonist in *Gate of the Sun* is comatose. A qualitative shift occurs here from (say) Jabra's self-sacrificing Arab hunters, to the resistant disappearance of Walid Masoud, and finally to the disintegration of selfhood in *The Other Rooms*. The Palestinian is now un-dead: neither alive nor dead but hovering in the agentless space in-between. Though the novel is packed with multiple stories, memories, and perspectives, the symbolism of a comatose protagonist is definitional and generative. Death, rather than resistance or challenge, becomes the novel's condition of possibility. If Khalil's past is unforgettable, his present is bleak, and his future non-existent. Self-emancipation is long gone and disintegration has left no room for recovery. Khalil cannot be willed back to life by committed Younis, who is unable to either leave his bedside, stop nursing him, or cease relaying his life's or his peoples' stories to him. Younis is as caught up in death as his un-dead political mentor is: entangled, un-free, and clutching at refugee narratives.

This, then, is *Gate of the Sun*'s constitutive question: what remains when all is lost and collective and individual agency disappear? Khoury's

answer is compelling: it never actually fully disappears as long as we have stories and remembrance. *Gate of the Sun* sees and names defeat, but it does so in such a way as to enable what it so politically yearns for yet does not see possible on the political horizon: another Palestinian crack against the crucible of dispossession: 'Back to the beginning' (27; 31). The novel is indeed an explosion of sheer and seemingly endless (even chaotic) detail. As if Khoury is heeding Said's call to meet Zionism's dispossessing '*policy of detail*' with a Palestinian strategy of detail, a politics based on concreteness rather than just generality of register.[9] Proliferation of detail is thus what strikes the reader most about the novel.[10] Oral historical accounts of the *nakba*, expulsions, wars, massacres, and various resistances and rebellions are strewn together by Younis, spanning from the 1936–9 Revolt to the Oslo present. Why? For good political reason. It is defeat that causes this explosion of detail. At the moment of capitulation, refugee self-narratives contest the surrendering Palestinian elite's distorted versions of peace and co-existence. The increasing prevalence of refugee narratives in the 1990s has been noted by anthropologist Randa Farah, who dubs this a contra-Oslo 'memory trend': 'However, in the last decade attention to history/memory has increased, especially oral narratives and life histories. In my view, this trend toward using the oral trope and life histories is not only indicative of theoretical shifts and academic interests, but became crucial following the Oslo agreements in the 1990s, promoted largely by the neglect of the refugee issue.'[11] If Oslo abandons refugee rights and politically marginalizes refugee camps, *Gate of the Sun* brings them back into focus like never before. As Younis himself says, Kanafani would also have written about Khalil today if he was not assassinated by Israel (40; 43). And Jabra too, but in his own style: 'I love Jabra because he writes like an aristocrat – his sentences are elitist and beautiful. It's true he was poor when he was a child, but he wrote like real writers, with expressive, literary sentences. You have to read them the way you read literature, not the way I'm talking to you now' (98; 99). If Khoury has a revisionist axe to grind with the founding generation (that can sound glib and a historical), it is clear that defeat and Oslo generate his own distinct aesthetic and political preoccupations here.[12] Though Khoury has been gathering these oral-historical accounts for years, they crystalize during the moral and political crisis of Oslo. Now that political agency is destroyed, revolution betrayed, and struggle for statehood aborted, all that remains are the many stories of injury and injustice. In the spirit of historical reckoning, revisiting the past is asking what Palestinians and Arabs should do now. Rather than mimicking Oslo and forgetting the *nakba*, Khoury

forces it back into consciousness, against the grain of flawed peacemaking. By doing that, he traces the degeneration of the same Palestinian nationalism that he believed in and served dutifully for so long. In that he mirrors Said's own disillusionment with Arafatism in *Peace and its Discontents* and Darwish's own rejection of Oslo, after both had been vocal supporters of Fatah.[13]

Gate of the Sun is thus best understood as Benjaminesque remembrance. The present is 'the "time of the now" which is shot through with chips of Messianic time', unsettling officialdom and existent defeat.[14] That's the double move Benjamin demands. First, to return to the past: 'to brush history against the grain', to see 'the oppressed class itself as the depository of historical knowledge', and to be 'nourished by the image of enslaved ancestors rather than that of liberated grandchildren'. And second, to utilize these memories in order to blast humankind out of the continuum of oppression: 'to blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history – blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework'. Memories of the downtrodden and defeated thus become the basis of liberation in the future. Michael Löwy described this process well when he linked remembrance with messianic time, in which future redemption becomes about reparation of past wrongs: 'For redemption to take place, there must be reparation – in Hebrew, *tikkun* – for the suffering and grief inflicted on the defeated generations, and the accomplishment of the objectives they struggled for and failed to attain.' Jabra would have recognized Benjamin's theologically-inflected political intervention. Yet, as Löwy proceeds to explain, the messianic self-sacrifice he sees Marxist Benjamin advocating is popular and democratic. It is, in fact, each generation's potential for political praxis: 'Messianic/revolutionary redemption is a task assigned to us by past generations. There is no Messiah sent from Heaven: we are ourselves the Messiah; each generation possesses a small portion of messianic power, which it must strive to exert.'[15]

Gate of the Sun, then, has all the makings of Benjamin's messianic remembrance. Unlike Jabra, and very much like Kanafani, Habiby, and Khalifeh, it is plebeian, popular, and self-produced – in the spirit of Habiby's 'write the letters you so desire', but under much worse conditions of defeat. As Faisal Darraj argues in his review of the novel:

> Elias Khoury's novel is the first Arab literary text to chart the comprehensive Palestinian path. It is first most splendid and beautiful because it achieved its essence as a great novel. It charts an august topic. 'The Gate of the Sun', in as much as it represents the most technically advanced work in the literary journey of Elias Khoury, it equally represents a creative contribution to

> the development of the Arab novel. If it weren't also an expression, the likes of which we do not often meet, of the novel as a democratic literary genre, not only in the topic it approaches but in the artistic structure that forms the topic.[16]

Tracing the comatose protagonist's interconnected life histories is preparing for a future whose contours are yet to be imagined and realized democratically *by all*. Consider, Khoury enjoins, the memories of downtrodden and defeated refugees when you come to reimagine and rebuild. What is at stake is future reparation. To remember is thus to reactivate struggle: it is to begin again and fight anew for what they failed to accomplish. And, it is worth adding, it is in this purposeful act of remembrance that the notion of *Gate of the Sun*'s postmodernism falters. If the novel hits postmodern notes of multiplicity, narrative self-reflexivity, and the real as simulacrum, its deep sense of mourning and nostalgia, and endless return to sites of injury, means that the world is not as weightless as the sceptical narrator sometimes wishes.[17] Suffering is too real, too multiple, to pretend that the grand narrative of freedom and emancipation is irrelevant today. *Bāb al-Shams* remembers both against the grain of Oslo and for the re-emergence of emancipatory agency in the future. As Eduardo Galeano, author of *Open Veins of Latin America*, put it: 'The past says things that concern the future.'[18]

If the history of the Palestinian novel is anything to go by, a new emergence of revolutionary praxis will come to mediate a new form of novel. Revolutionary remembrance may then be combined with a narrative form that is not only able to resist in its structure, but also to actively imagine the transformability of the present again.

Notes

Introduction: theory, history and form

1 Husam al-Saraī, 'Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: Dhākira li al-Ramād [Memory to Ashes]', *Al-Akhbār* (8 June 2010), p. 16.
2 Majid al-Samarra'i, 'Dhākira Thaqāfiyya Tanhāru maʿ Tafjīr Dār Jabra Ibrahim Jabra [Cultural Memory Collapses with the Explosion of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's House]', *Al-Hayat* (15 April 2010), accessed on 18 April 2010. For English coverage, see Anthony Shadid, 'In Baghdad Ruins, Remains of a Cultural Bridge', *New York Times* (21 May 2010), accessed on 22 May 2010.
3 For civilian deaths: iraqbodycount.org.
4 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 132.
5 A new signpost is the emergence of the Palestinian novel in English, which reflects new social trends of political displacement and belonging in the West. Examples are: Susan Abulhawa, *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), Selma Dabbagh, *Out of It* (2011), and Randa Jarrar, *A Map of Home* (2008). There is also the Palestinian novel in Hebrew. Anton Shammas' *Arabesques* (1988) is the best example of Israel's national language being masterfully made to articulate memories of Palestinian loss and colonial dispossession. In the face of denial and negation, the Palestinian past is recovered through a medium usually used to erase it.
6 Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999 [1979]), p. 122.
7 Jurj Tarabishi, *Al-Riwāya Ka-Malḥama Burjuwāziyya* [*The Novel as Bourgeois Epic*] (Beirut: Dar al-Taliʿa, 1979).
8 Unknown, *Al-Hadaf*, no. 92 (27 March 1971), 18–19.
9 Faisal Darraj, 'Jurj Lukács wa Nadhariyyat al-Riwāya [Georg Lukács and the Theory of the Novel]', *Shu'un Filastiniyya*, 90 (1979), 200–214. See also, Faisal Darraj, *al-Wāqiʿ wa al-Mithāl* [*The Real and the Ideal*] (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Jadid, 1989) and, Ibrahim Saʿāfīn, *Taṭawūr al-Riwāya al-Arabiyya al-Ḥadītha fi Bīlad al-Shām, 1870–1967* [*The Development of the Modern Arabic Novel in Greater Syria, 1870–1967*] (Beirut: Dar al-Manahel, 1987). An early example utilizing realism as critical method is Hussein Muruwa, *Dirāsāt*

Naqdiyya: Fi Du' al-Manhaj al-Wāqi'i [*Critical Studies: In Light of Realist Method*] (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ma'arif, 1965).

10 George Lukács [sic], 'Essay on the Novel', *International Literature* (May 1936), 68–74 (71). This analogy is stated many times. Here is another rendition from 'Pushkin's Place in World Literature': 'The Russian counterpart to the European revolution of 1848 is 1905. But the failure of the democratic revolution in this case proved to be merely a dress rehearsal for the victory in the proletarian revolution' (Georg Lukács, *Writer and Critic*, ed. and trans. by Arthur Kahn [London: Merlin Press, 1970], pp. 227–256 [p. 229]).

11 Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London: Merlin Press, 1962 [1937]), p. 345. Hereafter in the text as *HN*.

12 Joe Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Field Day, 2007), p. 77.

13 Lukács, *Writer and Critic*, p. 77.

14 Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism* (London: University of California Press, 1982), p. 78.

15 I borrow Lunn's phrasing here: *Marxism and Modernism*, pp. 78–79.

16 Georg Lukács, *Studies in European Realism*, trans. by Edith Bone (London: Merlin Press, 1972), p. 89.

17 Brian J. Shaw, 'Capitalism and the Novel: Georg Lukács on Modern Realism', *History of Political Thought*, 9.3 (1988), 553–573. Shaw argues that Lukács is inconsistent, utilizing the category of participation in class struggle opportunistically.

18 Lukács, 'Narrate or Describe?', in *Writer and Critic*, p. 111. Next quotes are from p. 127 and p. 133.

19 Lukács, *Studies in European Realism*, p. 269. Marx too articulated this double emphasis about the role of the bourgeoisie: heroic and yet prodded by the *sans-cullottes* to adopt revolutionary positions. See Michael Löwy, '"The Poetry of the Past": Marx and the French Revolution', *New Left Review* I, 177 (September–October, 1989), 111–124. For an excellent critique of the notion of the bourgeoisie as leaders of democracy and revolution, and its uncritical incorporation by postcolonial theory, see Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso, 2013).

20 It's worth commenting on the notion of 'bourgeois revolution' here. For Isaac Deutscher, *The Unfinished Revolution: Russia 1917–1967* (Oxford University Press, 1967), the notion that 'the bourgeoisie played the leading part, stood at the head of the insurgent people, and seized power … is schematic and historically unreal … almost a myth' (21). 'To the insurgent masses no revolution is ever bourgeois' (27). The designation 'bourgeois revolutions' is retroactive in that sense, marking the class in whose image post-revolutionary orders were slowly stamped' (22). For a conceptual and historical examination, see Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Making of a "Bourgeois Revolution"', *Social Research*, 71.3 (Fall 2004), 455–480 and his *Echoes of the Marseillaise* (London: Verso, 1990).

21 Löwy, '"The Poetry of the Past"', 124.

22 Fredric Jameson, 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text*, 15 (Autumn 1986), 65–88 (69).

23 Anna Bernard has reclaimed Jameson's 'national allegory' in her reading of 'world' texts from Israel/Palestine after 1980: *Rhetorics of Belonging: Nation, Narration, and Israel/Palestine* (Liverpool University Press, 2013).

24 Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. Debevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 189. In fact: 'Within deprived spaces, writers are condemned, in effect, to develop a national and popular theme' (191). Literature can hope to be free from the nation only after political independence.

25 Aijaz Ahmad's critique can be found in 'Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the "National Allegory"', *Social Text*, 17 (Autumn 1987), 3–25 (8), emphasis in the original.

26 Erica Benner, *Really Existing Nationalisms: A Post-Communist View from Marx and Engels* (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 82, p. 46. Next quote is from p. 179.

27 Mike Davis, 'Marx's Lost Theory: The Politics of Nationalism in 1848', *New Left Review* II, 93 (May–June 2015), 45–66.

28 For Lukács' extensive engagement with Hungarian national literature and how realism grew out of Hungarian conditions, see Georg Lukács, *The Culture of People's Democracy: Hungarian Essays on Literature, Art, and Democratic Transition, 1945–48*, ed. and trans. by Tyrus Miller (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

29 Georg Lukács, *Lenin: A Study in the Unity of his Thought* (London: Verso, 1997 [1924]), p. 47.

30 Fredric Jameson, 'Antinomies of the Realism-Modernism Debate', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 73.3 (September 2012), 475–485 (481).

31 Jameson, 'Third-World Literature', 86–87.

32 Materialism has been a strong presence in the field in the work of Timothy Brennan, Joe Cleary, Neil Larsen, Neil Lazarus, and Benita Parry (to name but a few) but the dominant theoretical paradigm has been poststructuralist, with an emphasis on textualism, heterogeneity, and the indeterminacy and instability of meaning. See Arif Dirlik, 'The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism', *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (Winter 1994), 328–356, and Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*.

33 As Terry Eagleton, following Raymond Williams, has argued, one cannot 'wish class or nation away': 'to undo this alienation you had to go, not around class [or nation], but somehow all the way through it and come out the other side': 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment', in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* by Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Edward W. Said (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 24. Benita Parry has criticized postcolonialism's critical disaffiliation from anti-colonial emancipatory politics: 'Liberation Movements: Memories of the Future', *Interventions*, 1.1 (1998), 45–51. For a critical examination of poststructuralist postcolonialism, see: Aijaz Ahmad 'The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality', *Race & Class* 36.3

(January 1995), 1–20, and *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. by Neil Lazarus (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

34 Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 139–170 (p. 149).

35 Neil Lazarus, 'Disavowing Decolonization: Fanon, Nationalism, and the Problematic of Representation in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse', *Research in African Literatures*, 24.4 (Winter 1993), 49–98 (90). For Bhabha's dilution of structural antagonism in the colonial relationship, see Benita Parry, 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse', *Oxford Literary Review*, 9.1–2 (1987), 27–58.

36 For sober reflections on the colonialism in Ireland and a review of Irish postcolonial studies, see Joe Cleary, 'Irish Studies, Colonial Questions: Locating Ireland in the Colonial World', *Outrageous Fortune*, pp. 14–46.

37 Francis Mulhern, *The Present Lasts a Long Time* (Cork University Press, 1998), pp. 156, 157.

38 'What is at issue is political democracy, not ethnic or national autonomy. Indeed national autonomy by no means automatically entails democracy; it is a necessary rather than sufficient condition of it, as freedom from the determination of another nation-state awaits translation into genuine popular sovereignty': Terry Eagleton, 'Nationalism and the Case of Ireland', *New Left Review* I, 234 (March–April 1999), 44–61 (48).

39 Omar Dahbour, *Illusion of the Peoples: A Critique of National Self-Determination* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), p. 26.

40 For a critique of multiculturalism and culturalist modes of recognition, see Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). Lea Ypi has written thoughtfully about the universal basis for objecting to colonialism as a form of 'political association that denies its members equal and reciprocal terms of cooperation' rather than as a violation of territorial claims: 'What's Wrong with Colonialism', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 41.2 (2013), 158–191 (158).

41 'Even if liberal nationalism is the current temptation of a number of political philosophers, this does not mean that they can overcome the incoherence built into an attempt to combine individual liberties with cultural conformity, political consent with communal exclusivity, or social egalitarianism with national chauvinism. Only if national identity is made into a category with little specific content can it be reconciled with liberal principles; but a robust conception of the nation will overwhelm attempts to moderate its intentions at the first hint of social crisis': Omar Dahbour, 'Introduction: National Identity as a Philosophical Problem', *The Philosophical Forum*, 28.1–2 (Fall–Winter 1996–7), 1–20 (14).

42 Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing Between the Singular and the Specific* (Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 127. See also his: 'The Will of the People: Notes Towards a Dialectical Voluntarism', *Radical Philosophy*, 155 (May 2009), 17–29.

43 The best example of 're-membering' Fanon, away from socialism and towards the cultural politics of psychic ambivalence and spatial in-betweenness is Homi Bhabha, 'Foreword: Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche, and the Colonial Condition', in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), pp. vii–xxvi. See also Homi Bhabha's recent 'Framing Fanon', in *Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), pp. vii–lx. For the most recent critique of 'poststructuralist Fanon', see Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 161–182. For a sympathetic reading of Bhabha which still admonished him for neglecting materiality and historicity, see Bart-Moore Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 114–151. For Fanon as humanist, see Nigel C. Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003).

44 Far too many commentators have completely ignored the fact that Fanon was a committed socialist. Socialism is, indeed, the theoretical core of *Wretched*. Sartre himself stressed Fanon's socialism in his famous preface. Reading selectively, postcolonialists only see the endorsement of violence in the Preface, even here ignoring violence's functionalist role in a far more important politics of liberation. Here is Fanon in his own words, carving out a New Left political space between the capitalist West and Stalinist bloc:

> Capitalist exploitation and cartels and monopolies are the enemies of under-developed countries. On the other hand the choice of a socialist regime, a regime which is completely oriented towards the people as a whole and based on the principle that man is the most precious of all possessions will allow us to go forward more quickly and more harmoniously, and thus make impossible that caricature of society where all economic and political power is held in the hands of a few who regard the nation as a whole with scorn and contempt.

(*The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington [London: Penguin, 2001 [1961]], p. 78). The notion of individual self-emancipation was emphasized in *Toward the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967): 'The liberation of the individual does not follow national liberation. An authentic national liberation exists only to the precise degree to which the individual has irreversibly begun his own liberation' (p. 103). It is in this context that Fanon's affective notion should be examined and understood.

45 The Palestinian historian Musa Budeiri described the mobilizational force of Islamic anti-colonial resistance during the British Mandate period in the following terms: 'Islamic concepts and historical parallels were utilized to mobilize the people en masse to social action. Religion was the medium not the message. The language and the symbols were cultural categories familiar to a society that through the long years of Ottoman rule had grown accustomed to viewing itself in religious terms. Concepts such as *Jihād*, *Shahīd*, *Fidā'i*, *al-Burāq*, and *al-'Arḍ al-Muqaddasa* were the terms commonly and frequently employed in the nationalist discourse of the period. The Crusades were repeatedly conjured up to give historical depth and to inculcate a sense of historical continuity to peoples' sense of identity. It is not that the Palestinians betrayed

an early fundamentalist bias or possessed a doctrinal bent, but their struggle against Jewish colonization was perceived in religious terms and this was their only recognizable *Weltanschauung*.' The significance of Islamic resistance can also be gleaned from the fact, Budeiri adds, that the 'two heroes' Palestinians produced at the time were both religious figures, the Mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husseini and 'Iz al-Din al-Qassam. 'The Palestinians: Tensions between Nationalist and Religious Identities', in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Middle East*, ed. James P. Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 191–206 (p. 196).

46 Riyad Mousa, 'The Dispossession of the Peasantry: Colonial Policies, Settler Capitalism, and Rural Change in Palestine, 1918–1948', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Utah (2006).

47 The Palestinian social historian Mahmoud Yazbak argues that: 'economic rather than political or national factors played a major role in the outbreak of the Arab revolt'. This explains why Haifa's landless migrants were so easy to organize by 'Iz al-Din al-Qassam. See his 'From Poverty to Revolt: Economic Factors in the Outbreak of the 1936 Rebellion in Palestine', *Middle East Studies*, 36.3 (July 2000), 93–113 (94).

48 Ghassan Kanafani, *The 1936–39 Revolt in Palestine* (New York: Committee for Democratic Palestine, 1972), p. 8. Next quote is from p. 18.

49 As Jacob Norris has recently pointed out, British repression (which involved indiscriminate killings, house demolitions, and collective punishment) not political factionalism was the primary cause for the failure of the rebellion: 'Under this kind of pressure, it is clear that the rebel movement stood little chance of survival, and British repression must therefore rank as the principal factor in the revolt's disintegration in 1939' ('Repression and Rebellion: Britain's Response to the Arab Revolt in Palestine of 1936–39', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 36.1 [March 2008], 25–45 [40]).

50 See estimates in Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (Washington: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1971), pp. 848–849.

51 Kanafani, *The 1936–39 Revolt*, p. 42. For a more recent examination of the Revolt as precursor to 1948, see Rashid Khalidi, 'The Palestinians and 1948: The Underlying Causes of Failure', in *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*, ed. by Eugene Rogan and Avi Shlaim (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 12–36.

52 Mona N. Younis, *Liberation and Democratization: The South African and Palestinian National Movements* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 68. 'Isa al-'Isa, editor of *Filasṭin* newspaper, would accuse the leadership of being 'the source of illness' and insist that: 'In the strike, we are all equal.' See Mustafa Kabha, 'The Palestinian Press and the General Strike, April-October 1936: "Fīlastin" as a Case Study', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 39.3 (July 2003), 169–189 (173).

53 Gudrun Krämer, *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel*, trans. by Graham Harman and Gudrun Krämer

(Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 290. For the Revolt as class struggle by lower classes against notables, see also Baruch Kimmerling and Joel Midgal, *The Palestinian People: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 121. Also relevant is Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: 1936–39 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2003).

54 A. W. Kayyali, *Palestine: A Modern History* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 214. In fact: 'At the height of their power the rebels constituted the supreme authority in most parts of rural Palestine with their own legal and administrative set-ups' (p. 214).

55 Even in Islamic politics, the British-appointed Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al-Husseini, who led the national movement in mandate Palestine, is a forgotten figure. The resisting al-Qassam, in contrast, is consecrated in both Islamic politics (with Hamas calling its military arm The 'Iz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades) and, more significantly, in secular Palestinian nationalism of the late 1960s and 1970s, where he is painted (even by the Palestinian Left) as a Guevarist and 'initiator of an advanced revolutionary foco', as Kanafani put it in his treatise on the Revolt, *The 1936–39 Revolt*, p. 22.

56 Lukács, *Writer and Critic*, p. 177.

57 Constantine K. Zurayk, *The Meaning of the Disaster*, trans. by R. Bayly Winder (Beirut: Khayat's, 1956 [1948]).

58 It would take the cause of Arab communism ten long (and crucial) years to recover from the Soviet Union's acceptance of the partition of Palestine in 1947 and its recognition of the State of Israel in 1948. Zurayk here sought to capitalize on the widespread disillusionment that Soviet Stalinism bred.

59 Zurayk, *The Meaning of the Disaster*, 'Now the United Nations has committed the same crime and sacrificed principle on the altar of interest. Its decision on partition transgresses the right of the people of Palestine to determine their future in accordance with well-established democratic processes and is also contrary to both the letter and the spirit of the United Nations Charter itself' (59).

60 Samah Selim, *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary in Egypt, 1880–1985* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 131.

61 Jabra, *Hunters in a Narrow Street* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1997 [1960]), p. 232.

62 It is worth noting that Lukács was not against fantasy, seeing it in significant instances as compatible with realism (Lukács, *Writer and Critic*, p. 78).

63 Joe Cleary, 'Realism after Modernism and the Literary World-System', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 73.3 (September 2012), 255–268 (265).

64 Aijaz Ahmad, '"Show me the Zulu Proust": Some Thoughts on World Literature', *Revista Brasileira de Litratura Comparada*, 17 (2010), 11–45 (33).

65 Simon Gikandi, 'Realism, Romance, and the Problems of African Literary History', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 73.3 (September 2012), 309–328 (319). See: Laura Moss, 'Can Rohinton Mistry's Realism Rescue the Novel?', *Postcolonizing the Commonwealth: Studies in Literature and Culture*, ed. by Rowland Smith (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000),

pp. 157–165. See also: Lazarus, 'The Politics of Postcolonial Modernism', in *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, pp. 21–88. In a different register, Madhu Dubey in her intervention in black literary studies has advocated a revaluation of current conceptions of aesthetics and the real: 'To discern what is novel about racial representation in postmodern African-American fiction, we may have to snap the enduring link between narrative realism and politically naïve representation or, conversely, between formal experimentation and political contestation' (*Signs and Cities: Black Literary Postmodernism* [Chicago University Press, 2003], p. 10). Two more examples: Eli Park Sorensen, *Postcolonial Studies and the Literary: Theory, Interpretation and the Novel* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and Dougal McNeill, *Forecasts of the Past: Globalisation, History, Realism, Utopia* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012).

66 See Priyamvada Gopal, *Literary Radicalism in India: Gender, Nation and the Transition to Independence* (London: Routledge, 2005) and Ulka Anjaria, *Realism in the Twentieth-Century Indian Novel: Colonial Difference and Literary Form* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

67 A vision of death and crumbling is presented in Lebanese writer Elias Khoury's *Little Mountain* [*Al-Jabal al-Ṣaghīr*], published in 1977. For example:

> Black metals eat me up: they tell me they're militia barrages. And I see my face crumbling down in the street. Black metals eat me up: my voice falls down all alone, and reaches out to my friends' corpses which are buried in communal cemeteries. Black metals eat me up: raising hands do not carry flags, but death. Metals are in the street, fear, empty gas tanks, corpses and black-marketed tobacco are in the streets. Victory has come. Death has come. War has come. And my mother shakes her head and tells me about the poor

(*Little Mountain*, trans. by Maia Tabet Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 21). For an illuminating discussion, see Mona Takieddine Amyuni, 'The Arab Artist's Role in Society. Three Case Studies: Naguib Mahfouz, Tayeb Salih and Elias Khoury', *Arab and Middle Eastern Literatures*, 2.2 (1999), 203–222.

68 Kamal Abu-Deeb, 'Cultural Creation in a Fragmented Society', in *The Next Arab Decade: Alternative Futures*, ed. by Hisham Sharabi (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1988), pp. 160–181 p. 169, p. 175. For a celebratory response to the destruction of Arab realism and the rise of Arab modernism, see Edward al-Kharrat, 'The Mashriq', in *Modern Literature in the Near and Middle East 1850–1970*, ed. by Robin Ostle (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 180–192. For example: 'If modernist creative writing in Arabic literature is in continuity with an old valid legacy, it is at the same time certainly a break-away from the conformism of the realist mode, a constant questioning with no pretence to ready answers, a leap in the dark by neither a complacent nor a complaisant literary enterprise' (p. 187). For Kharrat, modernism continues an older and richer Arab non-mimetic narrative tradition. Maybe. But his conception of realism as conformist and complacent is wrong, as is the coupling of unreal as freedom and real as un-freedom.

69 Its precursors lie in early Egyptian disenchantment with Nasserism, as a betrayal of Arab freedom and social justice. Naguib Mahfouz's *The Thief*

and the Dogs (1961) plants the seeds of this aesthetic shift, as does Sonallah Ibrahim's *That Smell* (1966). Faisal Darraj sees Mahfouz's novel as anticipatory of defeat, as he argues in his 'Min Riwāyat al-Hazīma 'ila Hazīmat al-Riwāya [From the Novel of Defeat to the Defeat of the Novel]', *Al-Kalima*, 7 (July 2007), accessed online, which charts the long twentieth-century shift in fiction from 'promising youth' to 'obstructed individual'. The analysis of 1967 as a pivotal moment of change in the Arab novel is developed, most recently, in his *Riwāyat al-Taqadum wa Ightirāb al-Mustaqbal* [*The Novel of Progress and the Alienation of the Future*] (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 2010). Another important signpost in what is a vast topic in literary criticism in Arabic is: Shukri Maddi, *In'ikās Hazīmat Ḥuzayrān 'ala al-Riwāya al-Arabiyya* [*The Reflection of the June Defeat in the Arab Novel*] (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1978).

70 Edward W. Said (with Jean Mohr), *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), p. 38.

71 Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p. 153, p. 123.

72 Edward W. Said 'Foreword', in Khoury, *Little Mountain*, pp. ix–xxi, p. xv.

73 The waning of historicity is one of Jameson's main features of postmodernism. See his classic study *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1990). See also Terry Eagleton's *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) for an argument about postmodernism as an outcome of the defeats of the emancipatory movements of the 1960s (the student, anti-colonial, and working-class movements).

74 Terry Eagleton, 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism', *New Left Review* I, 152 (July–August 1985), 60–73 (67).

75 Quoted in Kamal Abu-Deeb, 'The Collapse of Totalizing Discourse and the Rise of Marginalised/Minority Discourses', in *Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in Arabic Literature*, ed. by Kamal Abdel-Malek and Wael Hallaq (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 335–366 (p. 357).

76 Rasheed El-Enany, 'The Madness of Non-Conformity: Women versus Society in the Fiction of Salwa Bakr', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 37.3 (2006), 376–415.

77 Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 125. Next quote is from p. 121.

78 Anis Sayegh, *Palestine and Arab Nationalism* (Beirut: PLO Research Centre, 1970).

79 Both Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and Cabral in *Return to the Source* (1974) would describe the same process: socialist development or imperialism.

80 Abu Iyad (with Eric Rouleau), *My Home, My Land: A Narrative of the Palestinian Struggle*, trans. by Linda Butler Koseoglu (New York: Times Book, 1981), p. 221. Next quote from Abu Iyad is from p. 224.

81 Quoted by Sadiq Jalal al-Azm, *Dirāsa Naqdiyya li Fikr al-Muqāwama al-Filasṭīniyya [A Critical Study of the Thought of the Palestinian Resistance]* (Beirut: Dar al-'Awda, 1973), p. 220. Original source is a Fatah guerrilla training manual.

82 Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 2006), p. 177.

83 Yezid Sayigh, 'The Politics of Palestinian Exile', *Third World Quarterly* 9.2 (1987), 28–66 (51). Sayigh's excellent *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993* (Oxford University Press, 1997) is dedicated to explaining the predominance of the statist option in Palestinian nationalist politics, especially after Black September, as well as 'the marginal role of social ideology and the absence of a truly transformative programme': 'The underlying process of state-building placed political consolidation and control at a higher premium than social mobilization and transformation, while nationalism in turn legitimized the statist drive, even as the basic goals of liberation and independence remained unattained' (pp. 678–9).

84 Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, *September: Counter-Revolution in Jordan* (Buffalo, NY: Palestine Solidarity Committee, 1970), p. 23.

85 See the following by Kanafani from *Al-Hadaf*: an early attack on the American Rogers Plan: 'Manṭeq al-Istislām li Shurūṭ al-Qahr al-Amrīki [The Logic of Capitulation to America's Humiliating Conditions]', 2.52 (August 1970), p. 3; an argument against statehood: 'Shabaḥ al-Dawla al-Filasṭīniyya [The Ghost of the Palestinian State]' 2.90 (6 March 1971), 6–7; and an exposition of the coming peace settlement: 'Al-Ruku' al-Iḥtifāli [Celebratory Kneeling]', 2.92 (20 March 1971), 3–5.

86 Hisham Sharabi, 'Liberation or Settlement: The Dialectics of Palestinian Struggle', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 2.2 (Winter 1973), 33–48 (48).

87 Faisal Darraj, 'Disparities of the Palestinian Novel', *Banipal* 15/16 (Autumn 2002/Spring 2003), 47–52 (51). For Darraj, the 'novel of armed struggle' includes works by Yahya Yakhlif, Rashad Abu Shawar, and Tawfiq Fayyad. For his critique of Palestinian culture and authority, see his *Bu's al-Thaqāfa fi al-Mu'asasa al-Filasṭīniyya* [*The Poverty of Culture in the Palestinian Institution*] (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1996).

88 Sabry Hafez, 'The Transformation of Reality and the Arabic Novel's Response', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 57.1 (1994), 93–112 (105). Seclusion and inaction come to replace social and political intervention. For Hafez, these are only some of the shifts that take place in narrative structure.

89 As Terry Eagleton argues about the affinities of Lukács and Adorno in his discussion of Marxist criticism:

> Art is the negative knowledge of the actual world: wholly opposed though Adorno and Lukács are on so many central aesthetic issues, they nonetheless link hands in the assumption that art enables a cognition of essences … It is just that, for Adorno, art *becomes* the negative essence of the real, carries those contradictions on its head, rather than (as for Lukács) reflecting those contradictions in its content but repulsing them in its form.

(*Walter Benjamin, or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* [London: Verso, 1981], p. 93).

1 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's self-sacrificers: realism, revolt and renewal

1 His long introduction to his translation of Faulkner, *Al-Ṣakhab wa al-'Unf* (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilem li al-Malayīn, 1961) amounted to an advocacy of narrative experimentation. For the impact of Faulkner on the Arab novel, see Tawfiq Yousef, 'The Reception of William Faulkner in the Arab World', *American Studies International*, 33.2 (October 1995), 41–48. Yousef connects the translation to Jabra's own work: 'We find in his works the use of multiple points of view, interior monologue, first-person narrator, violent scenes of rape and murder, and most of the technical devices associated with stream-of-consciousness such as flashback, italicized words, peculiar punctuation, and sentence structure, and extended or cryptic sentences' (p. 43). For structural affinities between Faulkner and writers from the Global South, see Hosam Aboul-Ela, *Other South: Faulkner, Coloniality, and the Mariátegui Tradition* (Pittsburg University Press, 2007), and, more recently, Elliott Colla, '*Miramar* and Postcolonial Melancholia', in *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Naguib Mahfouz*, ed. by Waïl S. Hassan and Susan Muaddi Darraj (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2012), pp. 171–183.

2 For a selection of modern short stories chosen and translated by Jabra (including Joyce, Woolf, Mansfield, and Lawrence), see *Ailūl Bilā Maṭar* [*September without Rain*] (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1986). For a selection of criticism, see *Al-Adīb wa Ṣina'atuhu: Dirāsāt fi al-Adab wa al-Naqd* [*The Writer and His Craft: Studies in Literature and Criticism*], 2nd edition (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1983). Jabra also translated Beckett, Camus, and Edmund Wilson, (among many others), and was famous for translating many Shakespeare plays and sonnets.

3 Philip Weinstein, *Unknowing: The Work of Modernist Fiction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 2.

4 Jabra responded to Munif's revolutionary fire comment with: 'It must burn in Arab achievements of the present as well as in those which are to come. If in the work of art there is no fire into which the artist can thrust his hand, he will never be able to strike such a fire in his reader's soul. And perhaps the highest aim to which a novelist can aspire is to ignite this flame – this revolutionary fire which becomes a kind of immanence in man's life': 'Alaa Elgibali and Barbara Harlow, 'Jabra Jabra's Interpoetics: An Interview with Jabra Ibrahim Jabra', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* (Spring 1981), 49–55 (54). Next quote is from page 50.

5 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, 'Art, Dream and Action', in *A Celebration of Life: Essays in Literature and Art* (Baghdad: Dar al-Ma'mun, 1988), pp. 19–44 (p. 36, p. 39).

6 Jabra, 'The Rebels and the Committed', in *Celebration of Life*, pp. 59–86 (p. 66).

7 Jabra, 'Modern Arabic Literature and the West', in *Celebration of Life*, pp. 87–116 (p. 111).

8 Jabra, 'The Rebels and the Committed', p. 73. Issa J. Boullata makes this point well with regards to Jabra's poetry:

> [a new poetic sensibility] mostly inspired by the Arab need for rebellion and for socio-political and cultural change. Although committed to new values and a new life, Jabrā's

> poetry remained apart from the free-verse school of social realism in the Arab world rising on a wave of heady Arab nationalism and socialism. His poetry retained the individual's voice and vision and aspiration for freedom; it refused to be the voice of the tribe.

'Living with the Tigress and the Muses', *World Literature Today*, 75.2 (Spring 2001), 214–223 (215–216).

9 Eisa Muhammad Abu-Shamsieh has commented on this in his 'Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's Fiction: A Study of Themes and Techniques', unpublished PhD thesis, Indiana University (1987):

> Some of Jabra's critics have accused him of choosing most of his characters from the bourgeois class. He responds to this accusation by emphasizing his belief that he simply chooses them from the society in which he lives. In fact, Jabra is convinced that the majority who constitute modern Arab societies today are of rural, nomadic, and labour backgrounds. He asserts that Arab societies, contrary to Western societies, are not of bourgeois nature in the real sense (p. 89).

Jabra's insistence about shunning the label is important. It conveys his deep sense of himself as rebel. The notion that, as Abu-Shamsieh argues, Jabra neglected broad issues and social and political causes in his work (p. 239) is not the case. For what else are his heroes sacrificing themselves if not for social and political renewal.

10 Abdelrahman Munif, 'Clashing with Society at Gut Level', *Banipal*, 3 (October 1998), 8–14.

11 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, trans. by Roger Allen and Adnan Haydar (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000). In Arabic: *Al-Baḥth ʿan Walīd Masʿūd* (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1978). First page number refers to English edition, second to Arabic original.

12 For a prevalent view, see Muhammad Kamil al-Khatib, ' ʿĀlam Jabra Ibrahim Jabra al-Riwā'i', *Shu'un Filasṭīniyya*, 102 (May 1980), 105–123.

13 Majid al-Samara'i, *Ḥiwār fi Dawāfiʿ al-Ibdāʿ maʿ Jabra Ibrahim Jabra* [*A Dialogue about Creative Motives with Jabra Ibrahim Jabra*] (Tunis: Dar al-Maʿarif li al-Tibaʿa wa al-Nashr, 1996), p. 112.

14 Fabio Caiani and Catherine Cobham, *The Iraqi Novel: Key Writers, Key Texts* (Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 73–114.

15 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 491.

16 In his review of the Arabic translation of *Hunters*, Elias Khoury argues that its main protagonist encapsulates two key tropes: Palestine and cultural consciousness. Khoury thus posits that Jabra's conception of transformation and change in the novel is mainly cultural. See '*Sayyādūn fi Shāriʿ Ḍayyiq* [*Hunters in a Narrow Street*]', *Shu'un Filasṭīniyya*, 34 (June 1974), 178–182.

17 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, 'Mulāḥaẓāt ʿan al-Adab wa al-Thawra al-Filasṭīniyya [Notes on Literature and the Palestinian Revolution]', in *Al-Nār wa al-Jawhar: Dirāsāt fi al-Shiʿr* [*Fire and Essence: Studies in Poetry*], 3rd edition. (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1982), pp. 157–165 (p. 164, p. 158).

18 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *Princesses' Street: Baghdad Memories*, trans. by Issa J. Boulatta (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2005). In

Arabic: *Shāriʿ al-Amīrāt: Fusūl min Sīra Dhātīyya* (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1994). When a translation exists, the first page number always refers to the English edition.

19 Ahmad Abu-Matar shares this judgement in his *Al-Rīwāya fi al-Adab al-Filasṭīni (1950–1975)* [*The Novel in Palestinian Literature (1950–1975)*] (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1980), pp. 68–69. I'll mention two other possible contenders for first Palestinian novel: Najib Nassar's *Riwāyāt Mufleḥ al-Ghassāni* [*Mufleh al-Ghassani's Novel*], published in the 1920s (though more of a historical chronicle than a novel), and *Muthakarāt Dajājah* [*Memoires of a Hen*] by Ishaq Musa al-Husayni, published to Arab acclaim in 1943 (more compelling as a fable, and intriguingly Ghandian in its promotion of non-violent resistance). Important to note here is the pioneering role of Khalil Baydas in promoting the novel form in Palestine. Baydas is regarded as the father of the Palestinian novel. His own novel, *al-Warīth* [*The Inheritor*] was published in Jerusalem in 1920. He dedicated his life to translating Russian and Western novels into Arabic (even amending and 'localizing' their plots to boot). See Farouk Wadi, *Thalāth 'Alāmāt fi al-Riwāya al-Filasṭīniyya: Ghassan Kanafani, Emile Habiby, wa Jabra Ibrahim Jabra* [*Three Towering Figures in the Palestinian Novel*] (Acre: Dar al-Aswar, 1985), pp. 17–23. Wadi is disappointed to note that Baydas's novel lacks Palestinian setting or protagonist. He, indeed, shows that many other novels written by Palestinians at the time 'suffer' from this absence. For Wadi, they are 'alienated' (as he nationalistically puts it) from contemporary Palestinian historic realities – failing a nationalist criteria that is later met by the Palestinian novelists that he studies. As my discussion of Screams shows, I explain the lack of clear Palestinian setting differently: socially and culturally rather than nationalistically. For the pre–World War I culture in Palestine, see Hanna Abu Hanna, *Ṭalāiʿ al-Nahḍa fi Filasṭīn: Khirrījū al-Madārīs al-Rūsiyah, 1862–1914* [*Pioneers of the Renaissance in Palestine: Graduate of Russian School, 1862–1914*] (Beirut: Muasasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya, 2005). On the novel form itself, it's worth adding that, within Arab criticism, I subscribe to the school that argues for the distinction of the Arab novel form as a *modern* prose narrative. As Muhammad Siddiq has recently put it: 'the collapsing of constitutive differences between the novel and its putative "ancestors" in the Arab narrative tradition elides the very novelty and uniqueness wherein lies the novel's claim to literary, aesthetic, philosophical, and epistemological, and even political agency in modern Arab culture' (Muhammad Siddiq, *Arab Culture and the Novel: Genre, Identity, and Agency in Egyptian Fiction* [London: Routledge, 2007], pp. 24–25). If some critics regard Egyptian Muhammad Husayn Haykal's *Zaynab* (1914) to be the first Arab novel, others go back to Salim Bustani (1848–84) and his historical novels as originators of modern Arab fiction. Others still date it before the nineteenth-century Arab *nahda*, and completely dilute its distinct characteristics as a prose narrative form. Matti Moosa's *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1997) remains a key text in this discussion (Moosa belongs to the

Bustani school). For a historically informed critique of *Zaynab* as the first Arabic novel, see Elliott Colla, 'How *Zaynab* Became the First Arabic Novel', *History Compass*, 7.1 (2009), 214–225.

20 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *Yanābīʿ al-Ru'ya: Dirāsāt Naqdiyya* [*Springs of Vision: Critical Studies*] (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1979), p. 125. His support for armed resistance, in contrast to the Palestinian elite's futile 'attempts at change by beseeching and censuring', is clear here.

21 Jabra, 'Introduction: Why Write in English?', in *Celebration of Life*, pp. 11–17, (p. 13).

22 Franco Moretti, 'Conjectures on World Literature', *New Left Review* II, 1 (January–February 2000), 54–68 (62, 64).

23 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *Surākh fi Laylin Tawīl* [*Screams in a Long Night*] (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 2003 [1955]), p. 7.

24 Muhsin Al-Musawi argues that: 'As modernity is a move forward, any search for justifications in the past act[s] as hindrance' for Jabra: *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 350.

25 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, 'Prometheus Unbound', in *Al-Fan wa al-Ḥulum wa al-Fiʿl* (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1986), pp. 229–254 (p. 232).

26 For the links between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, I have benefited from: Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels & Reactionaries* (Oxford University Press, 1981); Aidan Day, *Romanticism*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2012); and Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789–1830* (London: Longman, 1989). Marshall Brown puts its succinctly: 'Romanticism grows out of Enlightenment. The new turns against the old, but it does so from a historical logic already inscribed in the old, and still preserved in the new' ('Romanticism and Enlightenment', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran, 2nd edition (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 34–55 (p. 39).

27 Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Prometheus Unbound', in *The Major Works* ed. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 229–313 (p. 232, p. 229).

28 David Bromwich, 'Love Against Revenge in Shelley's *Prometheus*', *Philosophy and Literature*, 26 (2002), 239–259 (256).

29 In an important poem he wrote at this time called 'The City', the urban masses are liberated from death, pain, and want by a huge transformative storm. See, *Tamūz fi al-Madīna* [*Tamuz in the City*], 2nd edition (al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1981), pp. 13–20.

30 Muhammad Siddiq, 'Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and the Novel of Subjective Aesthetics', in *The Arabic Novel Since 1950*, ed. by Issa J. Boullata (Cambridge, MA: Dar Mahjar, 1992), pp. 169–190, (p. 176).

31 Abu-Matar intriguingly argues that Palestine is the unmentioned future tense of the novel.

32 Faisal Darraj, 'The Arabic Novel: Flow in Writing and Decline in Reading', trans. by Bassam K. Frangieh, *Banipal*, 4 (1999), 76–78 (78).

33 Siddiq even argues that here:

> Jerusalem emerges as the paradigmatic city in all his subsequent novels. To be sure, other cities, notably Baghdad and Beirut, figure beside Jerusalem as loci of the fictional action, but only as pale copies, never as viable substitutes. Because of its intimate association with childhood and innocence, Jerusalem occupies a luminous space in the imagination of Jabra's heroes. How to retrieve it, together with that lost innocence, becomes the overriding concern of their adult life

(Siddiq, 'Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and the Novel of Subjective Aesthetics', p. 176).

34 Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (London: Saqi Books, 2004), p. 78, p. 102.

35 Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 82. No wonder that from a post-Iraq war sectarian perspective, a 1950s Baghdad of political mobilization and cultural experimentation has become an object of nostalgia. See Magnus T. Bernhardsson, 'Faith in the Future: Nostalgic Nationalism and 1950s Baghdad', *History Compass*, 9/10 (2011), 802–817.

36 Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, p. 78. As Batatu explains: 'a basic explanation for the scale and pace of the movement in the decades in question was that the land production relationships and the attendant social and economic conditions were impoverishing agriculture and, in originating areas most acutely affected, no longer conducive to a tolerable peasant life' (p. 132). And: 'In a period of only ten years – 1947 to 1957 – no fewer than 205,765 persons migrated to the Baghdad province alone. The impact on a country like Iraq of a movement on such a scale and at such a pace can be imagined' (pp. 133–134).

37 Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Hogarth, 1992), p. 162.

38 Jabra, *Yanābī' al-Ru'ya*, p. 135. Next quote is from p. 129.

39 Terry Eagleton, *Sacred Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 276, 290.

40 Jabra, *Yanābī' al-Ru'ya*, p. 125.

41 Salma Khadra Jayyusi, 'Modernist Poetry in Arabic', in *Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. by M. M. Badawi (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 132–179 (pp. 146–147). Modernist here refers to renewal and discovery, and the breaking of old poetic forms by this generation of pioneers.

42 Abdul-Salaam Yousif, 'The Struggle for Cultural Hegemony during the Iraqi Revolution', in *The Iraqi Revolution of 1958: The Old Social Classes Revisited*, ed. by Robert A. Fernea and Wm. Roger Louis (London: I. B. Tauris, 1991), pp. 172–196 (p. 178).

43 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *Al-Nār wa al-Jawhar* [*Fire and Essence*] (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1982), p. 163.

44 The poem is translated in Nazeer El-Azma, 'The Tammuz Movement and the Influence of T. S. Eliot on Badr Shakir al-Sayyab', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 88.4 (October–December 1968), 671–678 (675). Jabra himself quotes this ending in his essay 'Art, Dream, and the Act' (1976), arguing that the new poet doesn't only sing in the name of the collective but 'asks, demands, and condemns' power and evil (33). See Jabra's *Celebration of a Life*.

For Sayyab's poetic lexicon and the links to Jabra's translation of the myth of Adonis from *The Golden Bough*, see Terri DeYoung, *Placing the Poet: Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Postcolonial Iraq* (Albany: State University of New York, 1998), pp. 72–73.

45 Hussein N. Kadhim, 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Bayyati "Odes to Jaffa"', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 32.2 (2001), 88–106 (90, 92).

46 As Khalid A. Sulaiman argues in *Palestine and Modern Arab Poetry* (London: Zed, 1984), the *Fidā'i* theme in Arab poetry on Palestine becomes much more prevalent after 1967 and the rise of the Palestinian resistance movements (pp. 139–148). Nizar Qabbani's famous 'Fatah' poem, which opens *Al-Adab* magazine's June 1968 issue, is a case in point. In his celebratory response to the Battle of Karamah, which in March 1968 came to mark the popular political emergence of the Palestinian resistance, Qabbani invokes Christ's death and resurrection. In the same breath, he also invokes another Eastern prophet: 'O Fatah we are Mecca awaiting the Prophet'.

47 Rasheed El-Enany, 'The Novelist as Political Eye-Witness: A View of Najib Mahfouz's Evaluation of the Nasser and Sadat Eras', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 21.1 (1990), 72–86 (76–77).

48 Rasheed El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of Meaning* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 111 (pp. 112–113). The critical and anticipatory nature of the novel noted by many commentators: 'This novel is clearly a commentary on certain aspects of Egyptian society in the mid sixties, and its exposure of opportunism, cynicism, disillusionment with the government's discourse and sense of powerlessness to influence events can, with hindsight, be seen as prophesying the defeat of 1967' (Hilary Kilpatrick, 'The Egyptian Novel from *Zaynab* to 1980', in *Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. by M. M. Badawi [Cambridge University Press, 1992], pp. 223–269 [p. 257]).

49 Quoted in El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz*, pp. 117–118.

50 Darraj, 'The Arabic Novel', p. 78.

51 Iraq's leading novelist, Gha'ib Ṭu'ma Farman, used what can be described as multivocal realism to portray the lives of poor and working-class Baghdadis. Farman's *Al-Nakhla wa al-Jīrān* (1966) is regarded as Iraq's first artistic novel. See Caiani and Cobham *The Iraqi Novel*, for a discussion of Farman as a pioneering writer and realist. For Batatu, *Khalid Jalal* (1928) by Mahmud Ahmad al-Sayyid is Iraq's first novel (pp. 400–402). Interestingly, both Farman and al-Sayyid were associated with Iraqi communism.

52 Jabra I. Jabra, *The Ship*, trans. by Adnan Haydar and Roger Allen (Colorado Springs, CO: Three Continents, 1985). In Arabic: *Al-Safina* (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1990; org. 1970). First page number refers to English edition, second to Arabic original.

53 Batatu, *Old Social Classes*, p. 805–807. See also Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), pp. 47–84: 'it was a time of great hope and optimism for the future. At last, many believed, a government had come to power that would not only free the country from the tutelage of Britain and her clients, but

would pursue policies directed towards the fulfillment of their own interests' (p. 47).

54 For an accessible discussion, see Kanan Makiya, *The Monument: Art, Vulgarity and Responsibility in Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 81–93.

55 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *Jewad Salim wa Naṣbu al-Ḥurriyya* [*Jewad Salim and the Freedom Monument*] (Baghdad: Wizarat al-I'lam, 1974),p. 11. For Salim's artistic philosophy summarized above, see pp. 189–194.

56 Faisal Darraj, 'Al-Filasṭīni bain al-Wāqi' wa al-Wahm al-Riwā'i fi Riwāyāt Jabra Ibrahim Jabra [The Palestinian between Reality and Novelistic Illusion in Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's Novel]', *Shu'un Filasṭīniyya*, 95 (October 1979), 148–167. For a discussion of *The Ship*, see pp. 156–163.

57 Jabra, *Yanābī' al-Ru'ya*, p. 136.

58 Elgibali and Harlow, 'Jabra's Interpoetics', 54.

59 For Jesus as uncompromising revolutionary, see Terry Eagleton's excellent 'Introduction' to *Jesus Christ: The Gospels* (London: Verso, 2007).

60 For Benjamin as a Marxist Rabbi, combining theology with Marxism, see Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'* (London: Verso, 2005).

61 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *Al-Riḥla al-Thāmina* [*The Eighth Journey*] (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1967), pp. 29–33.

62 'Abd Raheem Mahmoud, 'The Martyr', in *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, ed. by Salma Khadra Jayyusi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 209–210 (p. 209).

63 For a history of Christian Love, from Gospels to Liberation Theology, see Bernard V. Brady, *Christian Love: How Christians Throughout the Ages Have Understood Love* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2003). For neighbourly love as love of enemies, see pp. 63–65.

2 Ghassan Kanafani's revolutionary ethics

1 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (London: Penguin, 2001 [1961]), p. 199. On literature: 'It is a literature of combat, because it moulds the national consciousness, giving it new and boundless horizons; it is a literature of combat because it assumes responsibility, and because it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space' (p. 193).

2 Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*, 2nd edition (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), p. 147. Allen also makes a strong case for Kanafani as experimentalist and innovator in narrative form, as his discussion of *All That's Left to You* shows (pp. 147–153).

3 Quoted in Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (London: Longman, 1987), p. 11.

4 The political development of the Arab Nationalist Movement is analysed in Walid W. Kazziha, *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World: Habash*

and His Comrades from Nationalism to Marxsim (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975). The most comprehensive history is Muhammad Jamal Barut, *Ḥarakat al-Qawmiyīn al-'Arab: al-Nash'ah, al-Taṭawwur, al-Masā'ir* [*The Arab Nationalist Movement: Origins, Evolution, Destinies*] (Damascus: al-Markaz al-Arabi li al-Dirāsāt al-Istratijiyya, 1997). See also As'ad AbuKhalil, 'George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 28.4 (Summer 1999), 91–103.

5 Cited in Stefan Wild, *Ghassan Kanafani: The Life of a Palestinian* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975), p. 13.

6 'Ḥadīth Yunshar li-A'wwal Marra m'a al-Shahīd Ghassan Kanafani [Discussion Published for the First Time with Martyred Ghassan Kanafani]', *Shu'un Filasṭīniyya* 35 (July 1974), 136–142 (137–138). For the impact of Palestinian reality on his work, see p. 139.

7 Both essays were published in *Al-Adab al-Filasṭīni al-Muqāwim 1948–68* [*Palestinian Resistance Literature 1948–1968*] (Beirut: Dar al-Adab: n.d.) and reprinted, with samples from many of the poets discussed, in *Ghassan Kanafani*: *Al-Āthār al-Kāmila* [*Ghassan Kanafani: The Collected Works*], 4 vols. (al-Dirāsāt al-Adabiyya [Literary Studies]) (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1998). Page numbers in body of text refer to the original.

8 '48 Palestinians' refers to those Palestinians who after 1948 remained in what became Israel, while '67 Palestinians' refers to those occupied in 1967 in the West Bank and Gaza.

9 M. M. Badawi has described its literary rise and poetic register in *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 204–223, and in 'Commitment in Contemporary Arabic Literature', *Journal of World History*, 14 (1972), 858–879 (reprinted in *Critical Perspective on Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. by Issa J. Boullata [Washington, DC: Three Continents, 1980], pp. 23–44).

10 Verena Klemm, 'Different Notions of Commitment (Iltizam) and Committed Literature (al-Adab al-multazim) in the Literary Circles of the Mashriq', *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literature*, 3.1 (2000), 51–62, (57).

11 Though Kanafani knows that most of the poets he mentions were members of the Communist Party (CP), he doesn't name it. He does, though, mention the 1958 demonstration in Nazareth, which the CP mainly organized in order to challenge Israel's military rule. He also references the CP's main publications, like *Al-Ittihad* and *Al-Jadid*, where much of the poetry he discusses was published. He does name *Ḥarakat al-Ard* (The Land Movement), a radical Arab nationalist movement which included Sabri Jiryis and Habib Qahwaji (whose poetry he also discusses). His reticence about the CP results from its (Soviet enforced) acceptance of the partition plan of 1947, deemed anti-nationalist and justificatory of Israel at the time. I discuss the contradiction of Palestinian communism, as epitomized by one of its leaders Emile Habiby, in Chapter 3.

12 Ghassan Kanafani, 'Shi'r al-Muqāwama Kamā Yarāhu Ghassan Kanafani [Resistance Poetry as Seen by Ghassan Kanafani]', *Mawaqif*, 2.9 (May–June 1970), 139–143 (140).

13 Kanafani went on to publish the first study of Zionist literature in Arabic, as Anis Sayigh, who commissioned it for the Palestinian Research Center that he headed, claimed: 'On Zionist Literature', *Collected Works: Ghassan Kanafani, 4 vols*. Kanafani's main argument is that Zionist writers let their ideological commitments undermine both the literary quality and the truth value of their works. Their literature, as a result, suffers from distortion and justification of an unjust cause. Kanafani's study was based on a thesis he wrote at Damascus University titled 'Race and Religion in Zionist Literature.' It is important to note that the Palestine Research Center published tens of studies on Israel and Zionism in its first couple of years of existence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, making Israel one of the most studied countries in the region.

14 Neil Lazarus talks about Kenyan Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* (1977) in those terms: 'Yet through the whole novel there is Ngugi's insistence upon the *transformability* of existing conditions': 'Great Expectations and After: The Politics of Postcolonialism in African Fiction', *Social Text*, 13/14 (Winter–Spring 1986), 49–63 (62).

15 Muhammad Siddiq, *Man Is a Cause: Political Consciousness and the Fiction of Ghassan Kanafani* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), p. 87.

16 Mary N. Layoun, *Travels of a Genre: The Modern Novel and Ideology* (Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 189.

17 Karen E. Riley, 'Ghassan Kanafani: A Biographical Essay', in Ghassan Kanafani, *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa and Other Stories*, trans. by Barbara Harlow and Karen E. Riley (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000), pp. 1–12 (p. 5).

18 Radwa 'Āshūr, *Al-Ṭarīq 'ila al-Khayma al-'Ukhra: Dirāsa fi 'Amāl Ghassan Kanafani* [*The Way to the Other Tent: A Study of the Works of Ghassan Kanfani*] (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1977) pp. 40–41. See also Muhammad Siddiq, 'On Ropes of Memory: Narrating the Palestinian Refugees', in *Mistrusting Refugees*, ed. by E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen (University of California Press, 1995), pp. 87–101.

19 Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun: And Other Palestinian Stories*, trans. by Hilary Kilpatrick (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999), p. 21. In Arabic: *Rijāl fi al-Shams* in *Al-Āthār al-Kāmila* [*Collected Works*], vol. 1 (al-Riwayat [The Novels]), pp. 29–152 (p. 37). First page number in the text is to the English edition. For an illuminating discussion of the novel in English, see Joe Cleary, *Literature, Partition and the Nation State* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 186–225.

20 Elias Khoury calls this: 'A new stage in consciousness'. The 'historic act' of confronting the dispossessing enemy will come with *All That's Left*. See 'Al-Baṭal al-Filasṭīni fi Qisas Ghassan Kanafani [The Palestinian Hero in Ghassan Kanafani's Stories]', *Shu'un Filasṭīniyya*, 13 (September 1972), 167–180 (174).

21 Mai Al-Nakib, 'Kanafani in Kuwait: A Clinical Cartography', *Deleuze Studies*, 9.1 (2015), 88–111 (101).

22 In Arabic: *Ma Tabaqqa Lakum* in *Al-Riwayat* [*The Novels*], *Al-Āthār al-Kāmila* [*Collected Works*], 4 vols., vol. 1, pp. 151–233. In English: *All That's Left to You: A Novella and Short Stories*, translated by May Jayyusi and Jeremy Reed (Northampton, MA: Interlink, 2004).

23 Siddiq, *Man Is a Cause*, p. 24. Roger Allen also discusses it in his *The Arabic Novel* (147–153) and concludes that 'it remains a subtle and innovative treatment of this most popular of topics [the Palestinian cause] for modern Arab authors, and an interesting contribution to the development of narrative modes in Arabic fiction' (p. 153). And, more recently, Aida Azouqa explores its Faulknerian features in 'Ghassan Kanafani and William Faulkner: Kanafani's Achievement in *All That's Left To You*', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 31.2 (2000): 147–170.

24 Quoted in Siddiq, *Man Is a Cause*, p. 38.

25 Orit Bashkin discusses women's emancipation in Kanafani's writings 'Nationalism as a Cause: Arab Nationalism in the Writings of Ghassan Kanafani', in Christoph Schumann, *Nationalism and Liberal Thought in the Arab East: Ideology and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 92–111.

26 Siddiq, *Man Is a Cause*, p. 37.

27 Ahmad Khalifah, 'Ālam al-Qadiyya al-Filasṭīniyya fi Adab Ghassan Kanafani [The World of the Palestinian Question in the Literature of Ghassan Kanafani]', *Shu'un Filasṭīniyya*, 13 (September 1972), 156–166 (156). Page numbers in the text hereafter.

28 Khoury, 'Al-Baṭal al-Filasṭīni', 180. Next quote is from p. 179.

29 For Nancy Coffin, Kanafani's distinct contribution is to affirm 'the power of the people' not just power of arms: 'Engendering Resistance in the Work of Ghassan Kanafani: *All That's Left to You*, *of Men and Guns*, and *Umm Sa'd*', *Arab Studies Journal*, 4.2 (Fall 1996), 98–118 (115).

30 See, for example, 'Al-Muqāwama Amām Ikhtiyāriha al-Maṣīri … Mātha al-'Ān? [The Resistance Faces its Fateful Choice … What Now?]', *Al-Hadaf*, 2.86 (6 February 1971), p. 3.

31 The notion of a crisis of the Palestinian revolution is developed even before its liquidation in Black September, when the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine's (PFLP) hijackings were used as an excuse to crush the whole resistance movement in Jordan. For Kanafani's views on this, see 'Interview with Ghassan Kanafani on the PFLP and the September Attack', *New Left Review* I, 67 (May–June 1971), 47–57.

32 Sadik Al-Azm, *Self-Criticism after the Defeat*, trans. by George Stergios (London: Saqi, 2011), p. 38. Next two quotes are, respectively, from p. 111 and p. 118.

33 If for al-Azm political vacillation had class causes in petit-bourgeois leadership, for Edward Said in *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1999[1979]) the reason was 'the scandal of historical exile' (155): 'With no territory underneath one's feet it is patently hard to know with certainty what, in an abstract sense, is the best course to steer' (162). Said's exilic emphasis is consistent with his rejection of 'open class conflict among Palestinians' and

'internecine conflict *in exile*': 'Insofar as the Palestinian quest is for national self-determination, anything deflecting that quest is probably going to be harmful rather than beneficial.' This also explains his generous take on the Palestinian bourgeoisie: 'One must never minimize the effect of exile upon even the most successful bourgeoisie' (167). Said would come to change his mind about Palestinian nationalism and Arafatism when he understood that self-preservation was even more determining than exile for the Palestinian establishment, as he argues in his devastating critique of Oslo in *Peace and Its Discontents* (New York: Vintage, 1996).

34 Husam al-Khatib's analysis can be found in his article 'Al-Thawra al-Filasṭīniyya: 'ila 'Aīn? [The Palestinian Revolution: Where is it Going?]', *Shu'un Filasṭīniyya* (September 1971), 4–30 and in his book *Fi al-Tajruba al-Thawriyya al-Filasṭīniyya* [*The Palestinian Revolutionary Experience*] (Damascus: Manshūrāt Wizārat al-Thaqāfa, 1973).

35 I make this point against many critics of Kanafani's novel who downplay *Returning to Haifa*'s literary merits, misinterpreting its clarity and accessibility for simplicity and crudeness, especially after their stated admirations for the sophistications of *Men in the Sun* (see, for example, M. M. Badawi in *The Arabic Novel*–). To my mind, no other novel conveys the nature of the Palestinian-Israeli colonial encounter as well as *Returning to Haifa*. Munif articulates this position in his essay on Kanafani's the novel in *Dhākira li al-Mustaqbal* [*Memory for the Future*] (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 2001), pp. 73–82, calling the novel, if not his most artistically important, then certainly his most 'clear and courageous', 'noble', and 'humanist' intervention.

36 Kanafani, *Returning to Haifa*, pp. 149–196 (p. 149). In Arabic: *'Ā'id 'ila Ḥaifa* in *Al-Āthār al-Kāmila* [*Collected Works*] 4 vols., vol. 1, pp. 337–414 (p. 341). Page number in text hereafter, with the first number referring to the English edition.

37 Radwa 'Āshūr, *The Other Tent*, p. 145.

38 Kanafani uses the same name, Dov, that Uris uses for his main protagonist in *The Exodus*. The fact that he provides him with humanist-familial not Zionist motivations for staying with Miriam and Iphrat may well be Kanafani's way of telling Uris that he will not let ideology or nationalism blind him to the human dimensions of the colonial encounter. For Kanafani, this is what Uris had clearly failed to do in *The Exodus*, with his sheer contempt for Arab characters.

39 Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination 1969–1994* (New York: Vintage, 1995), p. xix. For an illuminating argument about the connection between Said's philosophical and political commitments, see Saree Makdisi, 'Said, Palestine, and the Humanism of Liberation', *Critical Inquiry*, 31.2 (2005), 442–461.

40 For such an argument, see Barbara Harlow, 'Return to Haifa: "Opening the Border" in Palestinian Literature', *Social Text*, 13/14 (1986), 3–23. Harlow's work on Kanafani is indispensable. What I'm criticizing here is merely her specific point about *Returning to Haifa* as a one-state novel.

41 For the PLO's global identity and ideological affinities with other liberation struggles, Paul Chamberlain, 'The Struggle Against Oppression Everywhere: The Global Politics of Palestinian Liberation', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 47.1 (January 2011), 25–41.

42 Jean Genet, 'Four Hours in Shatila', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 12. 3 (1983), 3–22 (3).

43 Quoted in Jonathan Judaken *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2006), p. 190. I rely on Judaken's informed account of Sartre's views on Israel–Palestine from the late 1940s onwards. For Sartre's anti-colonial politics and its links to his philosophy, see Paige Arthur, *Unfinished Projects: Decolonization and the Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (London: Verso, 2010).

44 Another powerful contrast to Sartre in the French context is Maxime Rodinson's seminal *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* trans. by David Thorstad (New York: Pathfinder, 1973). Also relevant is the political exchange between Marcel Liebman and Ralph Miliband over Israel and 1967: *The Israeli Dilemma: A Debate Between Two Left-Wing Jews*, ed. by Gilbert Achcar (London: Merlin, 2006). For Edward Said's political disappointment with Sartre, see his 'My Encounter with Sartre', *London Review of Books*, 22.11 (1 June 2000).

45 Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, trans. by Barbara Bray (New York Review of Books, 2003 [1986]), p. 9. Page references provided in the body of the text.

46 Edward W. Said, 'On Jean Genet's Late Works', in *Imperialism and Theatre: Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, ed. by J. Ellen Gainor (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 237. Reprinted in *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006).

47 Jean Genet, 'The Palestinians', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 3.1, (1973), 3–34 (9). Next quote from this essay is from p. 8.

48 Lucien Goldmann, 'The Theatre of Genet: A Sociological Study', *The Drama Review*, 12.2 (1968), 51–61 (52). Next quote is from p. 61.

49 Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956–1976* (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 154.

50 Simon Critchley, 'Writing the Revolution – The Politics of Truth in Genet's *Prisoner of Love*', *Radical Philosophy*, 56 (1990), 25–34.

51 Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (New York: Basic Book, 2003), p. 122.

52 Genet, 'The Palestinians', 15.

53 Edmund White, *Genet: A Biography* (New York: Vintage, 1994), p. 540.

54 Said, 'On Jean Genet's Late Works', p. 240.

55 Jean Genet, 'Interview: Affirmation of Existence through Exile', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 16.2 (1987), 64–84.

3 Emile Habiby: capture and cultural escape in *The Pessoptimist* (1974)

1 Quotes are from Dalia Karpel's documentary *Emile Habiby: I Stayed in Haifa*, Transfax Films, 1996. My thanks to Siham Daoud for kindly providing me with a copy of this important portrait of Habiby.

2 Emile Habiby, *Sirāj al-Ghūleh* [*The Oil-Lamp of the Ogress*] (Haifa: Arabesque, 2006), p. 46 (first published in the magazine *Masharef* no. 15, May 1997). 'Mendelbaum Gate' can be found in *Sudāsiyat al-'Ayyām al-Sitta, wa Qissas Ukhrá* [*Sextet of the Six Day War and Other Stories*] (Haifa: Arabesque, 2006), pp. 95–105.

3 Najwa Kawar Farah, *A Continent Called Palestine: One Woman's Story* (London: Triangle, 1996), p. 75.

4 Michel Khleifi and Eyal Sivan, *Route 181*: *Fragments of a Journey in Palestine-Israel* (2003).

5 Sabri Jiryis in his pioneering *The Arabs in Israel* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976 [1966]) shows how Palestinians in Israel were treated exactly like refugee Palestinians with regard to land expropriations.

6 Elia T. Zureik, *The Palestinians in Israel: A Study in Internal Colonialism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 197, p. 29. The fact that various Israeli governments have consistently pursued a policy of systematic containment and discrimination even after the end of the military regime in 1966 is clearly revealed by a leaked government report from 1976 and by other corroborating archival evidence. Ahmad Sa'di has summarized the approaches of two key documents as follows:

> Both of them adhered to the same discourse and sought similar objectives. They shared the goals of decreasing the proportion of the Palestinians among the country's population, the splitting up of the concentrations of Palestinian population by Jewish settlement and security instillations, the use of reward and punishment policy, the creation of a new leadership of collaborators, the fight against independent, nationalist, and Communist leaders as well as against indigenous organizations, disallowing the establishment of a worthwhile Palestinian economic base, and preventing the Palestinians from holding significant positions in the economy.

('The Koenig Report and Israeli Policy Towards the Palestinian Minority, 1965–1976: Old Wine in New Bottles', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 25.3 [Summer 2003], 51–61 [58]).

7 Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State* (Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 198.

8 Ahmad Sa'di, 'Minority Resistance to State Control: Towards a Re-Analysis of Palestinian Political Activity in Israel', *Social Identities*, 2.3 (1996), 395–412 (405). Sa'di's long-term aim has been to understand the real sociological and historical determinations of 48 Palestinians outside of flawed 'modernization theories' and mainstream Israeli sociology, which essentially read Palestinian existence through the prism of the Israeli security establishment. In place of settler colonial dispossession, they see a culturally induced identity crisis. For an alternative Israeli perspective, see Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

9 Zureik, *Palestinians in Israel*, pp. 200, 201.

10 Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London: Merlin, 1962 [1937]), p. 206, p. 285. All following page numbers in body of text.

11 Allen Douglas and Fadwa Malti-Douglas, 'Literature and Politics: A Conversation with Emile Habiby', in *The Arabic Novel Since 1950*, ed. by Issa J. Boullata, *Mundus Arabicus*, 5 (1992), 11–46 (43).

12 M. Keith Brooker has suggested that Lukács' typical characters, who embody social and historical forces, may not be so far off from Jameson's national allegories: 'The Historical Novel in Ayi Kwei Armah and David Caute: African Literature, Socialist Literature, and the Bourgeois Cultural Tradition', *Critique*, 38.3 (Spring 1996), 235–248 (244). Would Jameson, then, describe Scott's or Tolstoy's novels as national allegories?

13 Fredric Jameson, 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text* 15 (Autumn 1986), 65–88 (69). Aijaz Ahmad, 'Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the "National Allegory"', *Social Text*, 17 (Fall 1987), 3–25.

14 Michael Sprinker, 'Marxism and Nationalism: Ideology and Class Struggle in Premchand's *Godan*', *Social Text*, 23 (Autumn–Winter 1989), 59–82.

15 As Lukács argues in *Writer and Critic*: 'But in our opinion it is not necessary that the phenomena delineated be derived from daily life or even from life at all. That is, free play of the creative imagination and unrestrained fantasy are compatible with the Marxist conception of realism. Among the literary achievements Marx especially valued are the fantastic tales of Balzac and E. T. A. Hoffmann' (p. 78).

16 Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999 [1979]), p. 153.

17 The English edition I quote from, *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist* is translated by Salma Khadra Jayyusi and Trevor Le Gassick and published by Readers International in 1989. I follow their spelling of Saeed. Original Arabic: Emile Habiby, *Al-Wāqai' al-Gharībah fi Ikhtifā' Sa'īd abi al-Naḥs al-Mutashā'il* (Haifa: Arabesque, 2006 [1974]).

18 'Strange' misses many connotations of the Arabic word *'ajiba* that Habiby uses, which carries the sense of miracle, fantasy, out-of-this-world, and disbelief.

19 'More than twenty thousand Arab refugee-infiltrators managed to cross into Israel during its first five years of existence. They hid in Arab settlements [sic], and in the end the state had no choice but to grant them Israeli citizenship. This augmented the country's Arab population by about 15 percent.' Hillel Cohen, *Good Arabs: The Israeli Security Agencies and the Israeli Arabs, 1948–1967* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 6. See also pp. 65–94. Benny Morris, in his *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–2001* (New York: Vintage, 2001), details that: 'Israel's defensive measure resulted in the death of between 2,700 and 5,000 infiltrators, mostly unarmed, during 1949–56, the vast majority during the first four or five years' (p. 274). And: 'Israel probably expelled more than 10,000 suspected infiltrators during the period 1949–56. In 1952 alone, the number was 3,181' (p. 275).

20 Musa Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party 1919–1948: Arab & Jew in the Struggle for Internationalism* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979), p. 83, p. 94. Next two quotes are from p. 153 and p. 241.

21 Radwan al-Hilu, 'The Speech by Ridwan al-Hilw [sic] (Yusuf), the Palestinian Delegate' Seventh Congress of the Communist International (August 1935): www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/7th-congress/arab2.htm.

22 For an excellent discussion of Arab Marxist attitudes to and analyses of Zionism in those years, see Gilbert Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives*, trans. by G. M. Goshgarian (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009), pp. 51–63. The Iraqi CP, he details, held out for six months against Stalin's new partition line and denounced it as similar to imperialist designs and a violation of the Palestinian right of self-determination. See also Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movement of Iraq* (London: Saqi Books, 2012), pp. 598–599. For an illuminating literary and political interview with Habiby (conducted by Mahmoud Darwish and Elias Khoury), see Emile Habiby, 'Anā Huwa al-Ṭiflu al-Qatīl [I am the Slain Child]', *Al-Karmel* (Winter 1981), 180–198.

23 In his study of Soviet foreign policy in the Arab world, Rami Ginat even goes so far as saying that: 'Establishment of the state of Israel on 14 May was internationally an important achievement for the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and its satellites supported the Jews in every way throughout the war in Palestine. The military aid which the Soviet bloc extended to Israel … was a major factor in enabling the Jews to gain important military victories; it was also a significant factor in promoting Soviet political and strategic ambitions in the Arab world' ('Soviet Policy Towards the Arab World, 1945–48', *Middle East Studies*, 32.4 [October 1996], 321–335 [330–331]). The Palestinian and Arab national cause was thus sacrificed on the altar of Soviet geostrategic aims of ousting the British from the Middle East and of seeking an alliance with the emerging Jewish state.

24 Habiby marked the twentieth anniversary of the massacre with *Kafr Qasim, al-Majzara – al-Siyāsa* (*Kafr Qasim: The Massacre – The Politics*) (Haifa: Arabesque, 1976). See Shira Robinson, 'Local Struggle, National Struggle: Palestinian Responses to the Kafr Qasim Massacre and its Aftermath, 1955–66', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35 (2003), 393–416.

25 For more details on the vicious political hounding of Habiby as collaborator, see Leora Bilsky, 'The Habibi Libel Trial: Defamation and the Hidden-Community Basis of Criminal Law', *University of Toronto Law Journal*, 61.4 (Fall 2011), 617–655. Bilsky uses Henrik Dethlefsen, 'Denmark and the German Occupation: Cooperation, Negotiation or Collaboration?', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 15 (1990), 193–206, to make a conceptual distinction between collaboration as a political choice by the elite and the broader sociological concept of adaptation to foreign occupation which describes 'the enforced and necessary adaptation of a whole society' to a foreign occupier (199). Habiby, as I show, plays with both ideas in the novel: both social adaptation and Saeed's own history of collaboration. For the most researched criticisms of Habiby in the context of communist party history, see Khidr Miḥjez, *Emile Habiby: al-Wahm wa al-Ḥaqīqa* [*Illusion and Truth*] (Damascus: Qadmus, 2006). Much angers Miḥjez about Habiby,

including the fact that he was recipient of both Al-Quds Prize from the PLO in 1990 and the Israel Prize in 1992 for literature, with the latter accepted during Israel's massive repression of the first *intifada*. The contradictions of Habiby are many.

26 Cohen, *Good Arabs,* p. 41. In a footnote, Cohen adds: 'Some Arab activists charged the Communists with being insufficiently nationalist, because of their recognition of Israel. The party's ability to operate within Israeli law served as proof of this. Yet it was unquestionably the Communist Party that led the fight of Israel's Arab population against military rule in the 1950s.' The charge of collaboration has recently been levelled by Ahmad H. Sa'di in 'Communism and Zionism in Palestine-Israel: A Troubled Legacy', *Holy Land Studies*, 9.2 (2010), 169–183.

27 The question of Israeli and Palestinian communism still needs further historical exploration. Errors were, no doubt, inevitable in a bureaucratized Soviet party that shunned open and democratic debate, silenced internal critics, and saw Israel as a potential ally in Cold War politics in the Middle East. How, for example, can Habiby, who clearly understood the meaning and causes of 1948 as an act of systematic expulsion, perpetuate a blatantly false version of the war in his political writings in *Al-Ittihad*, blaming: first, British imperialism; second, Arab reaction; and third, Jewish elements, for Palestinian dispersion? (See, for example, *Al-Ittihad*, 26 November 1954, p. 3). For a very long time as well, the Israeli Communist Party (with a majority Arab membership) would celebrate Israel Independence Day in the same breath as it would commemorate the *nakba*: both in the name of 'the brotherhood of nations and their right of self-determination'. Habiby himself, in fact, urged Palestinians inside Israel, then under military government, to commemorate the *nakba* and not to severe the connection between past and present generations (see, 'The Nakba of the Nakbas', *Al-Ittihad* [11 December 1959], (p. 3). The contradictions of Soviet communism in Israel are many. For a critical analysis, see Joel Beinen, 'The Palestine Communist Party 1919–1948', *MERIP Reports*, 55 (March 1977), 3–17, and Mahmoud Muhareb, *Al-Ḥizb al-Shuyū'i al-Isrā'īli wa al-Qaḍiyya al-Filasṭīniyya, 1948–1981* [*The Israeli Communist Party and the Palestinian Cause, 1948–1981*] (Jerusalem: n.p., 1989). For recent historical analysis of the contradictions of being Palestinian in Israel see: Robinson, *Citizen Strangers* and Leena Dallasheh, 'Nazarenes in the Turbulent Tide of Citizenships: Nazareth from 1940 to 1966', unpublished PhD Thesis, New York University (2012).

28 Gabriel Piterberg, 'Erasure', *New Left Review* II, 10 (July–August 2001), 31–46.

29 Mahmoud Darwish, *Journal of an Ordinary Grief*, trans. by Ibrahim Muhawi (New York: Archipelago Books, 2010), p. 38, p. 34. Next quote is from p. 36. The original Arab was published as *Yawmiyyāt al-Ḥuzn al-'Ādi* (Beirut: Dar al-'Awda, 1973). For an excellent historical examination, see Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust*.

30 The sense that 48 Palestinians are quashed is also signified by Habiby's play on the name of Saeed's aunt early in the novel: Mahsiyya [counted one] is pronounced by the Jewish soldiers as Makhsiyya [castrated one]. After the expulsions of 1948, and as part of the state's efforts to prevent Palestinian refugee 'infiltration', remaining Palestinians were counted in a census. To be counted is to be castrated, Habiby jests.

31 Around 200 villagers were executed in Tantura after the village had surrendered. See two related pieces in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 30.3 (Spring 2001): Mustafa Al-Wali, 'The Tantura Massacre', 22–23 May 1948 (5–18) and Ilan Pappe, 'The Tantura Case in Israel: The Katz Research and Trial' (19–39).

32 In his autobiographical *Sirāj al-Ghūleh*, Habiby says that he wrote this episode in the summer 1971 as a response to the communist coup in Sudan (pp. 58–59). He wept when he heard, he relays, because he knew that violent revolutionary takeovers bode badly for the Arab communist movement, fearing that the CP leaders will one day meet their destiny and be executed, as they were in Iraq before.

33 For further discussion of the contrasts between Saeed and his *fidā'i* son, see Nancy Coffin, 'Reading Inside and Out: A Look at Habibi's *Pessoptimist*', *Arab Studies Journal*, 8/9.2/1 (Fall 2000/Spring 2001), 25–46.

34 As Issa J. Boullata argues, 'no Palestinian Arab, however loyal to Israel, can be fully accepted in the Israeli scheme of things' ('Symbol and Reality in the Writings of Emile Habibi', *Islamic Culture*, 62.2–3 [April–July 1988], 9–21 [14]). For an interesting reading of Saeed as a trickster that is inspired by Langston Hughes' blues impulse of 'laughing to keep from crying', see Jonathan Scott, 'The Miracle of Emile Habiby's Pessoptimist', *College Literature*, 37.1 (2010), 110–128.

35 Habiby was criticized for his depiction of Israeli Jews in Israel when Anton Shammas' Hebrew translation of *The Pessoptimist* came out in 1993. For details, see Rachel Feldhay Brenner, 'The Search for Identity in Israeli Arab Fiction: Atallah Mansour, Emile Habiby, and Anton Shammas', *Israel Studies*, 6.3 (2001), 91–112.

36 As Muhammad Siddiq argues in his excellent article on Darwish and Israelis: 'what is certain is that the strong imprint "Rita" left on the consciousness of the poet rendered him practically incapable of stereotyping Israelis or Jews or representing them as a single, undifferentiated monolith' ('Significant but Problematic Others: Negotiating "Israelis" in the Works of Mahmoud Darwish', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 47.4 (2010), 487–503. For a survey of how Palestinians and Israelis depict each other, see Kamal Abdel-Malek, *Rhetoric of Violence: Arab-Jewish Encounters in Contemporary Palestinian Literature and Film* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

37 For example, 'Al-Batīkh wa al-Siyāsa' [Watermelon and Politics]', in *Al-Ittihad* (30 July 1950), p. 3.

38 I borrow Jeff Spinner-Halev term to describe an ongoing and persisting historical injustice from *Enduring Injustice* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). Spinner-Halev's egalitarian liberal perspective is illuminating. But his brief

engagement with Israel–Palestine is problematic, especially since he makes it seem as if Jewish expulsion from Palestine (presumably by the Romans, but he doesn't say) is somehow equivalent as an enduring injustice to the colonial expulsions of the Palestinians by Israel. As in: 'When the Jews were expelled from Palestine, others moved in (as did some Jews); when some Palestinians were forced out, others moved in as well' (p. 185). First, surely *most* not *some* Palestinians were expelled. Second, is the harm committed by Rome the same as the harm committed by Israel? Spinner-Halev is right to conclude, though, that justice cannot occur so long as 'the Palestinians live under foreign domination' (p. 186).

39 Akram F. Khater, 'Emile Habibi: The Mirror of Irony in Palestinian Literature', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 24.1 (March 1993), 75–94 (91).

40 Ronald Barthes' evocative description of Voltaire as expressing the undisturbed spirit of French bourgeois ascendance is in 'The Last Happy Writer', in *Critical Essays*, trans. by Richard Howard (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972), pp. 83–89. For the *Pessoptimist* as an inter-textual and polyphonic text, see Maher Jarrar, 'A Narration of "Deterritorialization": Imil Habibi's *The Pessoptimist*', *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 5.1 (2002), 15–28.

41 Juhayna [Habiby], 'Kalima Sariḥa' [An Honest Word]', *Al-Ittihad* (5 September 1959).

4 Sahar Khalifeh: radical questions and revolutionary feminism

1 Sahar Khalifeh, 'My Life, Myself, and the World', *Aljadid: A Review & Record of Arab Culture and Arts*, 8.32 (Spring 2002): www.aljadid.com/features/0839khalifeh.html.

2 Muhammad Siddiq, 'The Fiction of Sahar Khalifah: Between Defiance and Deliverance', *Arab Studies Quarterly* 8.2 (Spring 1986), 143–160 (144). For Khalifeh's contribution in the context of the Arab women's novel, see Joseph T. Zeidan, *Arab Women Novelists: The Formative Years and Beyond* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 178–186.

3 Edward Said, *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination 1969–1994* (New York: Vintage, 1995), p. 137.

4 Mona N. Younis, *Liberation and Democratization: The South African and Palestinian National Movements* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 166. For an illuminating discussion about popular committees as key grass-roots organizations during the *intifada*, and as alternative forms of political authority to both the old landed elites and the PLO in exile, see Glenn E. Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 94–131.

5 See Madhu Dubey, 'The "True Lie" of the Nation: Fanon and Feminism', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 10.2 (1998), 1–29. As she argues: 'Fanon's nationalist texts are uniquely salutary because they do not require that politically emancipatory projects depend on the assertion of epistemological autonomy and difference from the modern West' (p. 22). For

combining humanism with feminism in the Algerian context, see Marnia Lazreg, 'Feminsim and Difference: The Perils of Writing as a Women on the Women in Algeria', *Feminist Studies*, 14.1 (Spring 1988), 81–107.

6 Peter Nazareth, 'An Interview with Sahar Khalifeh', *Iowa Review*, 11:1 (Winter 1980), 67–86 (82).

7 Terry Eagleton, 'Aesthetics and Politics', *New Left Review* I, 107 (January–February 1978), 21–34 (25).

8 Khalifeh, 'My Life, Myself, and the World'.

9 Nuruddin Farah's first trilogy, 'Variations on the Theme of an African Dictatorship (1979–83)', is a good example here. Jabra's *The Ship* (1970) is another.

10 Samira Azzam's (1927–67) pioneering role in the short story should also be recognized. Her work remains neglected, and her place in Palestinian letters needs to be more strongly acknowledged. Born in Acre and exiled to Beirut in 1948, Azzam's first collection, *Ashyā' Ṣaghīra* (*Small Things*) was published in 1954. Five more collections were to follow. She also contributed to the newspaper *Filasṭīn* in the pre-*nakba* period, under the pen name of Fatat al-Sahel (Girl from the Coast). Her realism had tragic tones, conveying the universal predicament of ordinary, plebeian characters as they grapple with loss, over-bearing circumstances, and alienation. See Kathyanne Piselli, 'Samira Azzam: Author's Works and Vision', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 20.1 (1988), 93–108; and Yasir Suleiman, 'Palestine and the Palestinians in the Short Stories of Samira Azzam', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 22.2 (September 1991), 154–165.

11 Nazareth, 'Interview with Sahar Khalifeh', 79, 76.

12 Sahar Khalifeh, *Lam Na'ud Jawāri Lakum* [*We are No Longer Your Slaves*] (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1999 [1974]), p. 34. Subsequent page numbers are provided in the body of the text.

13 Sahar Khalifeh, *Wild Thorns*, trans. by Trevor LeGassick and Elizabeth Fernea (New York: Interlink Books, 2000[1985]), p. 21. In Arabic: *Al-Sabbār* (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1999 [1976]), p. 22. Subsequent page numbers are provided in the body of the text, with the first referring to the English edition.

14 Yehya Yakhlif, 'Sahar Khalifeh: *Al-Ṣabbār* [Wild Thorns]', *Shu'un Filasṭīniyya* 70 (September 1977), 199–202 (201).

15 For Israel's early economic policy of integrating Palestinian labour and undermining independent Palestinian economy, see Neve Gordon *Israel's Occupation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 71–78. Palestinians labour was *pulled* by higher wages in Israel and *pushed* by declining economic activity in the West Bank (all part of Israel's open door policy of employing Palestinians workers and freeing up land for confiscation).

16 Emile Habiby, 'Min *al-Mutashāi'l* ḥatta *al-Ṣabbār* Sha'b Wāhid [One People from *The Pessoptimist* to *Wild Thorns*], *Al-Jadid*, 9–10 (September–October 1977), 35–40; Sahar Khalifeh, 'Bal Amarru wa Aqsā [Harsher and More Bitter]', *Al-Jadid*, 11–12 (November–December 1977), 28–33.

17 Sahar Khalifeh, '*Abbād al-Shams* [*Sunflower*] (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1987 [1980]), p. 12. Subsequent page numbers are provided in the body of the text.

18 Nazareth, 'An interview with Sahar Khalifeh', 78.
19 Aida A. Bamia, 'Feminism in Revolution: The Case of Sahar Khalifa', in *Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in Arabic Literature*, ed. by Kamal Abdel-Malek and Wael Hallaq (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 173–185 (p. 184). Bamia makes a strong argument for Khalifeh's feminist imaginary.
20 In her important study of 'heroine types' in Palestinian literature, Fayḥā' Qasem 'Abd al-Hādi shows how Rafīf is linked to Khalifeh's later heroine in *Mudhakarāt 'Imra'a Ghair Wāq'iyya* [*Memoires of an Un-Realistic Woman*] (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1986), where an alienated middle-class woman rages in private against family and social constrictions. See her discussion of Khalifeh in *Namāthij al-Mar'a/al-Baṭal fi al-Riwāyya al-Filasṭīniyya* [*Woman/Hero Types in the Palestinian Novel*] (Cairo: al-Hai'a al-Masriyya al-'Āama li al-Kitāb, 1997), pp. 74–90.
21 Norman Geras, *Literature of Revolution: Essays on Marxism* (London: Verso, 1985), p. 171.

5 Tonalities of defeat and Palestinian modernism

1 Theodor W. Adorno, 'Commitment', in *Aesthetic and Politics*, ed. by Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, and Georg Lukács (London: Verso, 1980), pp. 177–195, p. 194, p. 193.
2 Theodor W. Adorno, 'Arnold Schoenberg, 1874–1951', in *Prisms*, trans. by Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967), pp. 147–172, pp. 149–150.
3 Adorno, 'Cultural Criticism and Society', in *Prisms*, pp. 17–34 (p. 23).
4 Adorno gives these two examples in his 'The Position of the Narrator in the Contemporary Novel', in *Notes to Literature*, trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), *Volume* 1, pp. 30–36 (p. 35).
5 Eugene Lunn emphasizes these four distinctive features: reflexivity (aesthetic self-consciousness), montage, ambiguity, and dehumanization (the demise of the integrated subject). See his discussion in *Marxism & Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno* (London: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 34–37.
6 Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', in *Prisms*, pp. 243–271 (pp. 262–263).
7 Roger Foster, 'Lingering with the Particular: *Minima Moralia*'s Critical Modernism', *Telos*, 155 (Summer 2011), 83–103 (88).
8 Roger Foster makes this case in 'Adorno on Kafka: Interpreting the Grimace on the Face of Truth', *New German Critique*, 40.1 (Winter 2013), 175–198 (198).
9 Roger Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, trans. by Michael Robertson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), p. 529.
10 Martin Jay, *Adorno* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 110.
11 Adorno, 'The Position of the Narrator in the Contemporary Novel', p. 32.
12 Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), p. 51.

13 Peter Uwe Hohendahl, 'Autonomy of Art: Looking Back at Adorno's *Aesthetische Theorie*', in *Reappraisals: Shifting Alignments in Postwar Critical Theory* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 75–98, p. 80.

14 Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *Prismatic Thought: Theodor W. Adorno* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 174. Kai Hammermeister in *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 2002) succinctly put it as follows: 'In total society, the nonidentical finds its haven in art' (p. 203); with total 'roughly meaning lacking critical oppositional elements –because of the integration of the proletariat' (p. 196).

15 Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 279. Göran Therborn (in his 'The Frankfurt School', *New Left Review* I, 63 [September–October 1970], 65–96), has described this shift as '*a double reduction of science and politics to philosophy*' (74):

> In Horkheimer's programme, critical theory was defined as part of the political practice of the oppressed classes. From the middle of the 1940s, critical theory was located elsewhere, in the individual mind. The whole tenor of Horkheimer and Adorno's works in this period is characterized by the conviction that the only place where anything is still possible in the totalitarian world is the 'the individual sphere', where the task is to resist the intruding cruelty of the 'administered world'. (85)

16 Wolf Heydebrand and Beverly Burris, 'The Limits of Praxis in Critical Theory', in *Foundations of the Frankfurt School of Social Research*, ed. by Judith Marcus and Zoltán Tar (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1984), pp. 401–417 (p. 401, p. 403).

17 If an emancipatory praxis was reignited for Marcuse, it was still as blocked for Adorno as under fascism and Stalinsim. See Theodor W. Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, 'Correspondence on the German Student Movement', *New Left Review* I 233 (January–February 1999), 123–136 (129–130). Mandel comments critically on Adorno's rejection of student 'actionism' in *Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1999), p. 507.

18 Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: Verso, 1979), p. 42, p. 43. He adds: 'Theory became, for a whole historical period, an esoteric discipline whose highly technical idiom measured its distance from politics' (p. 53). Anderson proceeds to talk about Lukács' 'cumbersome and abstruse diction, freighted with academicism' and Benjamin's 'gnomic brevity and indirection' (p. 54) as examples.

19 Neil Lazarus has mobilized Adorno's for understanding the moment of the failure of decolonization in: 'Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will: A Reading of Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*', *Research in African Literatures*, 18.2 (1987), 137–174. See also: Keya Ganguly, 'Adorno, Authenticity, Critique', in *Marxism, Modernity, and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 240–256; and Rajev S. Patke, 'Adorno and the Postcolonial', *New Formations*, 47 (Summer 2002), 133–143.

20 Robert Spencer, 'Thoughts from Abroad: Theodor Adorno as Postcolonial Theorist', *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 51.3 (2010), 207–221 (210). Next quote is from p. 219.

21 Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 6, p. 4.

22 Jessica Berman, *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 29–30. Berman basically substitutes modernism for the modern. How else to explain the inclusion of George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* as transnational modernist texts? I have discussed the inflation of modernism and the limits of 'postcolonial modernism' in my *Fiction of the* New Statesman*, 1913–1939* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011).

23 Franco Moretti, 'The Spell of Indecision', *New Left Review* I (July–August 1987), 27–33. For a recent critique of irony as cultural strategy, see Timothy Brennan, 'The Case Against Irony', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 49.3 (2014), 379–394.

24 Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism* (London: Verso, 1996), p. 47.

25 For American modernism as 'the presumption that collective resistance to the damaging forces of modernization was impossible, even unthinkable', see Seth Moglen wonderful *Mourning Modernity: Literary Modernism and the Injuries of American Modernism* (Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 7.

26 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 286, p. 287. 'Deprived hinterlands' comes from *The Politics of Modernism* (p. 47).

27 Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 288. For a universalist critique of postcolonial theory and its flawed conception of the workings capitalism as a social system, see Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso, 2013).

28 Franco Moretti, 'Conjectures on World Literature', *New Left Review* II, 1 (January–February 2000), 54–68 (56). For a critical discussion of recent articulations of global capital (including Fredric Jameson and Harry Harootunian), see WRec (Warwick Research Collective), *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 1–48.

29 Anouar Abdel-Malek, *Egypt: Military Society*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968) pp. 378–383.

30 Samih Farsoun (with Christina E. Zacharia), *Palestine and the Palestinians* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), p. 181.

31 Anouar Abdel-Malek, 'The Crisis in Nasser's Egypt', *New Left Review* I, 45 (September–October 1967), 67–81 (78). In 1964, Abdel-Malek saw Egyptian options in stark terms: either further radicalization and deepening socialism or a gradual return to the imperial fold. 'Nasserism and Socialism', *Socialist Register* 1 (1964), 38–55 (52). This is what the struggle over decolonization amounted to, as Cabral put it: 'there are only two possible paths for an independent nation: to return to imperialist domination

(neocolonialism, capitalism, State capitalism) or take the socialist road' ('Weapon of Theory', in *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings of Amilcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), p. 133.

32 'Critics of Egypt's growing economic dependence on US aid voiced concerns that the country was also losing its foreign policy independence and becoming a puppet of US objectives in the Middle East … Egypt was no longer the single most dominant Arab state, and its ability to influence regional events was noticeably weaker than it had previously been': William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Middle East*, 3rd edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), p. 394. The contrast of Saddat with Nasser's pre-1967 regional prominence and Third World stature was blatant (p. 321).

33 Samir Amin, *The Arab Nation*, trans. by Michael Pallis (London: Zed, 1978), pp. 65–80. The shift to the bourgeoisie was clear: 'The contrast between the growing misery of the people and the enrichment of a small group of business operators grew apace' (p. 75).

34 Quoted in Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in The Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Disaster* (Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 256.

35 See Fawzy Mansour, *The Arab World: Nation, State and Democracy* (London: Zed Books, 1992).

> The Arab Oil-Decade, the 1970s, was also the decade of the decline of the movement for Arab national unification and the rise of various provincial patriotisms. This came about as a reaction to the humiliating defeat of Nasserism in the 1967 war, and Nasserism's failure to deal with that defeat in a revolutionary way. The decline was also a result of the rise to economic, then political, prominence within the Arab world of the conservative oil-rich regimes who were always frightened by the revolutionary implications of Arab unification. (p. 116)

36 Abdelrahman Munif, 'Clashing with Society at Gut Level', *Banipal,* 3 (October 1998), 8–14 (11).

37 Iskandar Habash, 'Unpublished Munif Interview: Crisis in the Arab World-Oil, Political Islam, and Dictatorship', trans. by Elie Chalala, *Al-Jadid*, 9.45 (2004?; [1999]): accessed online from www.aljadid.com.

38 Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (London: Saqi Books, 2004), p. 283.

39 Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism*, p. 254.

40 See interview with the leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, George Habash in *il-Manifesto* published on 29–30 January 1974 and reproduced in: 'Habash: Liberation not Negotiations', *PFLP Bulletin* 9 (March 1974), 6–7 and *PFLP Bulletin* 10 (April 1974), 4–5.

41 Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993* (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 332. The three subsequent quotes are from p. 454, p. 455, p. 494.

42 Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization: People, Power and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 214. 'Throughout their pursuit of a negotiated settlement in the years 1974 to 1983, the PLO/Fateh leaders

directed their efforts primarily to trying to persuade the U.S. government to use its undoubted influence over Israel to bring the Israelis to the negotiating table with them' (p. 258).

43 Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism* pp. 275–276.

44 Kamal Abu-Deeb, 'Cultural Creation in a Fragmented Society', in *The Next Arab Decade: Alternative Futures*, ed. by Hisham Sharabi (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 160–181, p. 169.

45 Especially notable in Khoury's collection is '13 Nisan [April]', which posits the beginning of the era of death as 13 April 1975, the day the Lebanese Civil war started: Elias Khoury, *Zaman al-Iḥtilāl* (Beirut: Mu'asasat al-Abḥāth al-Arabiyya, 1985), pp. 185–188.

46 Rosemary Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies: The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon* (London: Zed Books, 1994), p. 217. The quote is from a cadre of the Palestinian Resistance.

47 Barbara Harlow, 'Palestine or Andalusia: The Literary Response to the Israeli Invasion of Lebanon', *Race and Class*, 26.2 (1984), 33–43 (37).

48 Mahmoud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness: August, Beirut, 1982*, trans. by Ibrahim Muhawi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 133–134. For a reading of Darwish's text as Saidian late style, see Patrick Williams, '"No Aesthetic Outside my Freedom" Mahmoud Darwish and Late Style', *Interventions*, 14.1 (2012), 24–36. For more on the cultural ramification of 1982, see *The Ethics of Representation in Literature, Art, and Journalism: Transnational Responses to the Siege of Beirut*, ed. by Caroline Rooney and Rita Sakr (London: Routledge, 2013).

49 Homi K. Bhabha, 'A Question of Survival: Nations and Psychic States', in *Psychoanalysis and Cultural Theory: Thresholds*, ed. by James Donald (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 89–103 (p. 98).

50 Moustafa Bayoumi, 'Reconciliation Without Duress: Said, Adorno, and the Autonomous Intellectual', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 25 (2005), 46–64 (55–56).

51 Edward Said, 'Between Worlds', *London Review of Books*, 20.9 (7 May 1998). In an earlier piece titled 'Edward Said Reflects on the Fall of Beirut' (*London Review of Books*, 7.12 [4 July 1985]), he looks back on the Lebanese Civil War and talks about how he 'experienced the most common of all feelings in the disintegration of Beirut: that as a civilian one was entirely at the mercy of armed men whose guiding authority was somewhere else'.

52 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 132.

53 Elias Khoury struck the same note in his 'Al-Dīmuqrāṭiyya wa al-Istibdād al-Ḥadīth [Democracy and Modern Tyranny]', *Shu'un Filasṭīniyya* 81/82 (August–September 1978), 164–173.

54 'Al-Muthaqqafūn wa al-Hazīma', *al-Adab*, 1–3 (January–March 1983), 17–19; 33–35.

55 Abdulraham Munif, *Al-Dīmuqrāṭiyya Awwalan, al-Dīmuqrāṭiyya Dā'iman* (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 2004 [1991]).

56 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *'Ālam Bilā Kharāi'ṭ* [*World without Maps*] (Beirut: *al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1982*). Page numbers follow quotes in the body of text.
57 Faisal Darraj, 'Al-Kitāba al-Riwā'iya Ka-Sīra Dhātīa [Novel Writing as Autobiography]' *Abdulrahman Munif 2008* (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 2009), pp. 137–158 (p. 155, p. 156).
58 Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 298.
59 For a rich and succinct formulation, see Ernest Mandel, 'Anticipation and Hope as Categories of Historical Materialism', *Historical Materialism*, 10.4 (2002), 245–259.
60 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *Al-Ghuraf al-Ukhra* [*The Other Rooms*] (Beirut: al-Muasasa al-Arabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1986).
61 Salam Abboud describes a 'futile war … without results' in *Thaqāfat al-'Unf fi al-Irāq [The Culture of Violence in Iraq]'* (Köln: Al-Kamel, 2002), p. 35.
62 Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 189. Davis concludes that: 'The great sacrifices that Iraqis were forced to make during the war with Iran made many realize that, although the regime could offer extensive material benefits, as it had done until 1983, it could also cause tremendous human and material suffering' (p. 199).
63 The only exception is *Screams*: 'Jerusalem, Summer 1946'.
64 Hohendahl, *Prismatic Thought*, p. 87.
65 Amira Hass, 'Israel's Closure Policy: An Ineffective Strategy of Containment and Repression', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 31.3 (Spring 2002), 5–20. Hass seeks to counter the notion that closure and separation are an outcome of suicide bombings when the opposite is in fact true.
66 See Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labour, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).
67 For the change in Israel's settler colonial regime from limited inclusion to exclusion of the occupied, and its impact on Palestinian working-class leverage and the Palestinian national movement, see Mona N. Younis, *Liberation and Democratization: The South African and Palestinian National Movements* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 175–180.
68 Nigel Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority: From Oslo to al-Aqsa* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 90. And crucially: 'the Oslo framework constituted a hopelessly lopsided continuum of compromise whereby the provisions of international law were systematically undermined' (p. 120). Next quote is from p. 222.
69 Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State*, p. 177. The literature on Oslo is massive, including by prominent public intellectuals like Edward Said and Noam Chomsky and by Israeli journalist Amira Hass, especially *Drinking the Sea at Gaza: Days and Nights in a Land Under Siege*, trans. by Elana Wesley and Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999). Also excellent is Cheryl A. Rubenberg, *The Palestinians: In Search of a Just Peace* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003).

70 Younis, *Liberation and Democratization*, p. 167.

71 Amal Amireh, 'Between Complicity and Subversion: Body Politics in Palestinian National Narrative', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102.4 (2003), 747–772 (761).

72 Nahla Abdo, 'Women of the *intifada*: Gender, Class and National Liberation', *Race & Class*, 32.3 (1991), 19–34 (22).

73 For illuminating essays on the topic: Suha Sabbagh ed. *Palestinian Women of Gaza and the West Bank* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998).

74 Suha Sabbagh, 'An Interview with Sahar Khalifeh, Feminist Novelist', in Sabbagh, *Palestinian Women*, pp. 136–144 (p. 144).

75 The rise of Hamas and its enforcement of the *hijab* in Gaza is one significant example of the internal obstruction of women's emancipation, as Rema Hammami argues in 'Women, the Hijab, and the Intifada', *Middle East Report*, 164–165 (May–August 1990), 24–28.

76 Sahar Khalifeh, *Bāb al-Sāḥa* [*Gate of the Courtyard*] (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1990), p. 219.

77 See my 'Towards Liberation: Michel Khleifi's *Ma'loul* and *Canticle*', in *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*, ed. by Hamid Dabbashi (London: Verso, 2006), pp. 58–69.

Epilogue: remembrance after defeat – *Gate of the Sun* (1998)

1 Ben Kaspit reported in *Ma'ariv* daily that 'about a million bullets and other projectiles were used' in the first three weeks of the uprising in 2000: 'a bullet for every child' someone in the Israeli army quipped then: Ben Kaspit, 'Jewish New Year 2002: The Second Anniversary of the Intifada', Part I, *Ma'ariv*, 6 September 2002.

2 For an early evaluation, see Ziad Abu-Amer, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad* (Indiana University Press, 1994).

3 For an early selection in English, see *Modern Arab Poets, 1950–1975* ed. and trans. by Issa J. Boullata, (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, pp. 117–130). Boullata also wrote: 'The Beleagured Unicorn: A Study of Tawfiq Sāyigh', *Journal of Arab Literature*, 4 (1973), 69–93. Sayigh's biography in Arabic was written by Mahmud Shureih, *Tawfiq Sāyigh: Siratu Shā'ir Wa Manfá* (Beirut: Riyad al-Rayyis, 1989).

4 Since 2000, Israel declared war on occupied Palestinians. The massive destruction of (civilian) Gaza in 2008–9 and even more in 2014 is both a culmination and an intensification of what has been dubbed the *politicide* of the Palestinian people. To understand this destructive mutation in Israel's occupation regime, stemming from its new policy of internal and external closure, two books are key: Baruch Kimmerling, *Politicide: The Real Legacy of Ariel Sharon* (London: Verso, 2006) and Tanya Reinhart, *Israel/Palestine: How to End the War of 1948*, 2nd edition (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005).

5 Having said that, Hamas accepts the Palestinian national consensus of statehood on the 1967 borders in return for what it calls a long-term *hudna* (truce or quiet) with Israel – which an intransigent Israel rejects as it requires ending the occupation. See Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide*, 2nd edition (London: Pluto, 2010).

6 Gilbert Achcar, *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising*, trans. by G. M. Goshgarian (London: Saqi, 2013), p. 13.

7 Sahar Khalifeh herself is still a strong presence today, and has recently published a historical novel about Mandate Palestine titled *Of Noble Origins*. A historical register is clearly strong at present: Ala Hlehel's *Au Revoir 'Akkā* [*Acre*] (2014) and Ibrahim Nasrallah's *Time of White Horses* (2008) are two more notable examples.

8 *Gate of the Sun*, trans. by Humphrey Davies (New York: Picador, 2005). In Arabic: *Bāb al-Shams* (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1998).

9 Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992 [1979]), p. 95.

10 One reviewer even complained: 'These words [by Younis: "I'm drowning"] could express the state of the reader, who feels just as lost in a maze of stories without firm command of an author in control of his material. The idea for the book is brilliant, but the execution is uneven at best'. He also generously says: 'Indeed, there are so few novels about the *Nakba* that many Palestinians were grateful to Khoury simply for giving voice to their memories of the most traumatic and defining moment in their history': (Raja Shehadeh, 'The Palestinian Patient', rev. of *Gate of the Sun* by Elias Khoury, *The Nation*, 6 March 2006, 31–34 [33, 32]).

11 Randa Farah, 'Palestinian Refugees: Dethroning the Nation at the Crowning of the "Statelet"?', *Interventions*, 8.2 (2006), 228–252 (238).

12 I am thinking of Khoury's comments on the founding generation of Palestinian writers ignoring ordinary life and inventing unique Palestinian heroes as a way of negating exile. The charge about distinctive heroes may well be true of Jabra's self-sacrificers (it's far from true for the others), but even with Jabra, as I argued, the image of the *pharmakos* is pretty ordinary and everyday. The binary that Khoury constructs between an earlier literature of symbol and today's fiction of ordinariness jars against his own construction of Khalil as symbol – even referred to as such in the novel itself. For an excellent interview with Elias Khoury, conducted by Anton Shammas after the publication of *Bāb al-Shams* in Hebrew, parts of which were published in the Israeli daily *Yediot Aharonot*, see '*Bāb al-Shams* Qiṣatu Ḥubb, wa fi al-Ākhir al-Ḥubb Ahammu min Kulli Shaī' ['*Bāb al-Shams*: A Love Story, and Love is the Most Important Thing when all is said and done]', *Masharef*, 17 (2002), 216–255, especially 245–246.

13 Khoury does actually emphasize Khalil's Fatah credentials, and his criticism of left adventurism in the 1970s. What comes across most in the novel is the human dimension of the Palestinian tragedy rather than any particular factional perspective, even if the novel is too Palestinocentric compared with (say) Jabra's broad Arab-entangled narratives. On Darwish, see Sinan Antoon,

'Mahmoud Darwish's Allegorical Critique of Oslo', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 31.2 (2002), 66–77.

14 Walter Benjamin, 'These on the Philosophy of History', *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), pp. 253–264 (p. 263). Next quotes are from p. 257, p. 260, and p. 263.

15 Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'*, trans. by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2005), p. 32.

16 Faisal Darraj, '*Bāb al-Shams*: Riwāya Maskūna bi al-Ashbāḥ wa al-'Asi'la al-Mutakasira [*Gate of the Sun:* A Novel Haunted by Ghosts and Broken Questions]', *al-Wasat*, 30 March 1998, 60–61. Accessed on *Al-Hayat* website.

17 As when Younis tells Khalil: 'You think you're in the hospital, but you're mistaken. This isn't a hospital, it just resembles a hospital. Everything here isn't itself but a simulacrum of itself' (116; 116–117). Or: 'Writing is confusion; tell me, who can write the confusions of life? It's a state between life and death that no one dares enter' (214; 213). For an in-part Baudrillardian reading of Khoury's novel, see Gretchen Head, 'The Performative in Ilyās Khūrī's *Bāb al-Shams*', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 42 (2011), 148–182.

18 Quoted in Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, p. 52.

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